

रसोऽहमसु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः॥
 प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥८॥

पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ॥
 जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु ॥९॥

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्॥
 बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ॥१०॥

बलं बलवतां चाहं कामरागविर्वर्जितम्॥
 धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ॥११॥

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये॥
 मत् एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ॥१२॥



Jayadaya! Goyandaka

॥ Shri Hari ॥

The Secret of Jñānayoga

tvameva mātā ca pitā tvameva
 tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva
 tvameva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvameva
 tvameva sarvaṁ mama devadeva

by : Jayadayal Goyandka

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Publisher's Note

This book captioned 'The Secret of Jñānayoga' is a collection of 27 discourses of Late Sri Jayadayal Goyandka, delivered from time to time and published in Kalyana-Kalpataru. It is not a treatise but a simple compilation. Every discourse is self-sufficient and independent and contains valuable knowledge and information. Hence discourses are very useful for the strivers (Sādhakas) who are practising spiritual discipline, more particularly for the followers of path of knowledge (Jñānayoga).

The words are simply phonetic devices and vehicles to carry and communicate the ideas and thoughts. So they are insentient and quite disable to make any impact on the minds of the listeners or readers. As a matter of fact, it is the ideological force of the speaker that makes impression. It too, vary in degree from person to person—The speaker and the listener both inclusive. Sri Goyandka was a great devotee, a Jñānī and an exalted God-realised soul in the real sense of the words. It will not be an exaggeration to say that even in modern time of nihilism, he realised god-hood and had a vision of his favourite divinity. When such a person speaks, well, every word spoken by him becomes a living force and is capable of filling the void created by intoxicating materialism and helping those who are struggling for liberation.

The topics included, cover a broad range in the realm of spiritualism. The Sādhaka of any grade or stage may find in this book, the solution of his problems. The article "Is Mukti Open to All" establishes the fact beyond a shadow of doubt that cast, creed, faith or religion are no requisite qualification or obstruction in liberating the

soul. The equanimity at every stage and in every field of life, has been deservingly emphasized to a great extent. Gītā had always been to Goyandkaji a fountain of inspiration and a sure medicine to any spiritual ailment. The teachings of Gītā are the central axis of the ideas and thoughts propounded in the book. His thoughts on dispassion, piety, rebirth, company of saintly and accomplished persons and other subjects of spiritual nature, are something like beacon lights to the new entrants.

This book may serve as a hand book to the Bhakta, Jñānī as well as *Yogī*, all alike but to the followers of path of knowledge, it will be more useful and appealing. We hope the spiritual Sādhakas will get benefited from the book.

Now a few words about translation. Even though we have tried our best to render a faithful translation, yet the translation has its own limitations. It is difficult for a translator to give a verbatim version in a good language. Therefore, we apologise to our readers for the omissions and commissions here and there. The responsibility of any shortcomings is ours, we must admit. Yet we hope that our readers will excuse us and give a hearty welcome, as always, to this effort also.

—Publisher



CONTENTS

1. The Ineffable Mood of a Jñānī	7
2. The Yoga of Knowledge in the Gītā	12
3. Highest Goal of Existence	23
4. A Few Thoughts on Liberation	34
5. The Other World and Rebirth	49
6. Dispassion and Quietism	61
7. Amṛta-Dhārā	70
8. Desirelessness	86
9. Worship of Unqualified, Formless Brahma	99
10. Questions and Answers About Self-upliftment	109
11. The Glory of Equanimity	120
12. Is Mukti Open to All?	136
13. Feel No Frustration in the Path of God	150
14. Worthy Motives	155
15. The Criterion of True Progress	165
16. The Supreme End of Human Pursuit	178
17. Ways of Deriving Benefit from the Fellowship of Saints ...	186
18. The Divine Substance.....character and Inwardness	203
19. Transcendent Glory.....Vicegerents of God	211
20. Secret of the Formless Divine Essence	227

21. Self-denial, Self-control and Dispassion 234

22. Redemption through Self-control 245

23. The Truth and Secret of Desirelessness 256

24. Means of Arresting.....Growth of Sin 264

25. Glory of Even-mindedness 278

26. Worship of the Attributeless and Formless Divinity 285

27. What is Piety? 300



The Ineffable Mood of a Jñānī

Just as the mind does not withdraw from lying, violence, sexual indulgence and so on even after they have been decried by reason, even so the mind refuses to submit to the verdict of intellect reached through analytical reasoning, declaring the world to be merely conceptual or ideal. There is a stage in the life of a Sādhaka when such a thing happens. The Sādhaka describes such a mood by saying that the world is a mere idea according to the verdict of his reason. Later on, when the mind also accepts the verdict of reason, the Sādhaka begins to look upon the world as a mere idea. But even now the Sādhaka only conceives the world to be ideal; he does not realize it as such. Subsequently, when, as a result of continued mental practice, he actually begins to perceive the world as conceptual, the world appears to him sometimes as a shadow, while at other times it ceases to appear even as a shadow. Just as one, who perceives threadlike streaks of golden light in the sky where there are none through a defective vision, is cognisant of the fact that there is no such object in the sky and that the streaks only appear without any corresponding reality, even so it makes no difference to such a Sādhaka whether the world appears to him as mere shadow or does not appear at all. At no time and in no wise does the world appear to him as real. Such a stage in the life of a Sādhaka has been designated as 'अकल्पित स्थिति', (the actual stage of experience). This is known as the third stage of 'wisdom'; but even in this stage the perceiver or experiencer of such a state persists. A Sādhaka who has reached this stage is apt to err in his worldly dealings on account of intense mental exertion. But on reaching the fourth stage of God-realization one is not likely to commit such errors: one who has reached that stage efficiently discharges all his legitimate duties in the natural course as an automation without any conscious effort. The Lord has well said in the Gītā—"Whose undertakings are all free from desire and conscious effort

and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom, him the wise call a sage.*” Even in the fifth stage of ‘illumination’ one is likely to commit errors in his worldly dealings, with this difference that whereas the mood of the Sādhaka in the third plane is acquired, that of the Sādhaka in this plane is spontaneous. The third stage is followed by ‘realization’, which is only another name of liberation (मुक्ति). The followers of certain faiths and creeds such as Jainism, etc., believe in salvation after death only; but our Vedānta admits the possibility of attaining salvation even during one’s life-time. Saving knowledge or enlightenment can be acquired even before death. The distinct personality of one who has attained this state as well as the actions proceeding therefrom exist only in the eyes of others. There is no individual ego left to identify itself with them. It may be asked here as to how activity is possible in an organism without the presence of a conscious agent or doer. In reply to this it is stated that the Universal Ego (समष्टिचेतन) is present there all the same; the Ego which identified itself with a part has now expanded itself and embraced the whole, merged itself into pure Ego. And the motive power for activity is supplied by this pure Ego without any obstruction or hindrance. It may be further objected that the Universal or Pure Ego is present in dead bodies and inert matter as well: why, then, is there no activity in the latter? Our reply to this is that want of the inner sense of faculty (अन्तःकरण) is responsible for the absence of activity in dead bodies and inanimate objects. Should a Yogī be able to multiply his Citta (mind) and introduce it into a dead body or inanimate object, activity can be infused into such a body or object as well.

Now, if one asks who receives enlightenment (ज्ञान), we

* यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ॥

find no answer to this question. If the body is said to be illumined, the statement would not be compatible with reason; for it is not possible for a physical body to get spiritually illumined. If the Jīva (individual Ego) be called enlightened, the statement would be equally incongruous for the Ego can no longer be called a Jīva after enlightenment. If, on the other hand, we apply the epithet 'wise' to the Pure Ego, the statement would be equally preposterous, as the Pure Ego was never 'unwise'. Hence it cannot be definitely stated as to who is wise.

The concept of an enlightened soul exists in the mind of a person who has not yet reached the stage of enlightenment: in the eyes of the Pure Ego none else exists. An enlightened soul has no objective vision: how, then, can the world exist for him? Only those who are yet far from enlightenment imagine that the soul inhabiting a particular body has merged into the Universal Spirit: that the portion of the Universal Ego which has the mind superimposed on it, along with the mind is termed as the enlightened soul. Who in reality receives the epithet 'enlightened' nobody can say with the help of his speech, for in the eyes of an enlightened Soul enlightenment itself does not exist. The terms 'enlightened' and 'unenlightened' exist only for the edification of the world and the concept of enlightenment also resides in the mind of unenlightened souls only. Similar is the value of attempts made at defining the term Guṇātīta (one who has transcended the range of the three Guṇas or attributes). As a matter of fact, how can any distinguishing traits (लक्षण) exist in one who has transcended the three Guṇas. Such distinguishing traits inhere in the mind and every function of the mind is of the nature of the three Guṇas. The fact is that recourse is taken to the method of marking out the distinctive nature of the functions of the mind of a Guṇātīta in order to understand what is meant by the term. Śrīmad

Bhagavadgītā characterizes a Guṇātīta thus:—

“He, O Pāṇḍava, who abhorreth not perspicuity, activity, nor even infatuation, when actively present, nor longeth after them when they are no longer present.”*

The Lord has further discussed the characteristics of a Guṇātīta in the succeeding verses, viz., verses 23, 24, and 25 also. In the verse reproduced above the word ‘perspicuity’ (प्रकाश) should be taken to mean transparency of mind and the cognitive senses, activity (प्रवृत्ति) should be construed to mean voluntary effort (चेष्टा), and ‘infatuation’ (मोह) should be interpreted as the tendency to sleep, lethargy or ‘आलस्य’ (not ignorance or moral delinquency) or a state very similar to profound sleep in the matter of worldly knowledge. Since there is no ego identifying itself with the mind, in whom will ‘abhorrence’ (द्वेष) and longing (इच्छा) inhere? The very fact of the mind being free from attachment and aversion (राग-द्वेष), delight and sorrow (हर्ष-शोक) and such other pairs of opposites prove that there is no ego identifying itself with the mind. Had the Universal Ego been tied with the mind, it would have been possible for the latter to manifest evil propensities like attachment and aversion and so on. But the Universal Ego is never tied with the mind: it simply lends motive power to the mind. All these distinguishing traits, too, persist only so long as the world continues to make its impression upon our mind, and these are ideal traits to be imbibed by the Sādhaka. Hence it is that they find mention in the Śāstras.

The real position of a Guṇātīta can neither be understood nor described by anyone else: it can only be felt by those who have attained that position. Should anyone apply the tests to himself with a view to satisfying himself whether he

* प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।

न द्वेष्टि संप्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति ॥

answers such tests or not, he should be understood as devoid of wisdom. The very fact that he is in search of distinguishing traits proves that he is tied to the body: that he still maintains his distinctiveness from Brahma, otherwise there can be no separate investigator nor can he maintain a distinct position. Again, if he is keen on discovering such traits, why should he seek for them in a particular body alone? What prevents him from seeking for them in rocks and trees? The fact that he confines his quest to the body alone proves that he still identifies himself with the body. He has thus belittled himself already. Of course, if the Sādhaka detaches himself from the body (i.e., looks on the body as a spectator) and compares it with rocks and trees, this comparison may prove beneficial to him. The Gītā says:—

“When the seer perceiveth no agent other than the three Guṇas, and knoweth that which is higher than the three Guṇas, he entereth into My nature.”*

But he, too, who says that he has not yet received enlightenment is not enlightened; for he expressly says so. Even so he who claims to have received enlightenment should not be recognized as enlightened; for his profession of wisdom proves the existence of three separate entities; viz., the knower, knowledge and the object known. And he, too, who expresses a doubt on this point is not enlightened; for such a doubt cannot exist in the mind of one who has actually received enlightenment. What then, should an enlightened person say on this point? We get no answer to this question. That is why the position of an enlightened soul has been called ‘indescribable’ (अनिर्वचनीय).

□□

* नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥

The Yoga of Knowledge in the Gītā Question

An esteemed and learned friend belonging to Benares writes:—

“In the article under the caption Sāṅkhyayoga in the Gītā (Vol.1) three different standpoints have been discussed, and it has been put forward that the third was the correct point of view. You have attempted to show through that article that the Gītā establishes that the ‘Way of Knowledge’ (Sāṅkhyayoga) and the ‘Way of Action’ (Karmayoga) are two different paths, and both are independent ways of reaching salvation. I have my doubts on this point;

About the Gītā it is said:—

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

“The Upaniṣads are cows as it were; the milker is the Divine Cowherd, Śrī Kṛṣṇa; the son of Pṛthā (Arjuna) is the calf and the Gītā is the nectar-like milk.”

From this and other similar verses it appears that what the Gītā attempts to establish is also the cardinal teaching of the Upaniṣads. The Gītā cannot teach anything which may even slightly vary or deviate from the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are the breath of God ‘यस्य निश्वासितं वेदाः’—and similarly the Gītā represents words that emerged from the lips of the Lord Himself. There cannot be any contradiction between them. We meet with declarations like the following in the Upaniṣads:—

‘ऋते ज्ञानान् मुक्तिः,’ ‘ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यम्,’ ‘ज्ञात्वा देवं सर्वपाशापहानिः,’ ‘ज्ञानसमकालमुक्तः कैवल्यं याति हतशोकः,’ ‘तमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय,’ ‘तरति शोकमात्मवित्,’ ‘स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति,’ ‘ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्’ etc.

“There can be no liberation without Knowledge”;

‘Absolution can be reached only through Knowledge’; ‘By knowing Him one is released from all bonds’; ‘One is liberated the very moment he attains Knowledge and being freed from sorrow, gets absolution’; ‘By knowing Him alone one goes beyond death, there is no other way to liberation’; ‘The knower of Self crosses sorrow’; ‘He who knows the Supreme Reality becomes one with that Reality’; ‘The knower of Brahma attains the Supreme.’

Now, these clearly indicate Knowledge as the immediate cause of liberation; if therefore, Karma was also a direct cause, it would have been corroborated by similar declarations. But such declarations are not only not forthcoming; what is more, statements are found to the effect that salvation cannot be attained through Karma, e.g.:—

‘न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
त्यागेनैकेन अमृतत्वमानशुः ।’

‘नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।’

(कृतेन कर्मणा अकृतो मोक्षो नास्ति)

“Not through action nor through progeny nor again through money but through renunciation alone have they attained immortality. There is no liberation through action.”

With what emphasis and strength of conviction do the Śrutis assert that Karma (action) cannot lead to salvation? Karma has a place only in the preliminary stages for purification of the heart.

The Lord also corroborates this view through the following verses in the Gītā:—

संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः ।

(V.6)

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।
योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥

(V.11)

आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते ।
योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ॥

(VI.3)

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥

(XVIII.5)

“Renunciation is difficult to attain without the help of action.” “The Yogīs (followers of the Path of Action) perform action with the body, mind, intellect, or even the senses, giving up attachment, for self-purification (purification of the heart).” “For the man of meditation who seeks to purify his heart as a means to concentration, Yoga (work) is said to be the way; for the same man when he has attained to this Yoga, tranquillity (inaction) is said to be the way.” “Sacrifice, charity and austerity are purifiers of the heart of the wise.”

The Lord says the very same thing to Śrī Uddhava in Śrīmad Bhāgavata:—

तावत्कर्माणि कुर्वीत न निर्विद्येत यावता ।
मत्कथाश्रवणादौ वा श्रद्धा यावन्न जायते ॥

(XI.xx. 9)

“One should continue to perform actions so long as he does not get disgusted with work, or till he does not develop a faith in hearing My stories, and so on.”

These and other similar statements clearly show that Karma is the cause of Jñāna (Knowledge) and not of Mokṣa (Liberation).

Now, I shall examine the following verses of the Gītā mentioned by you in support of the argument on the strength of which you seek to establish the third point of view:—

‘सांख्ययोगौ पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः ।’

(V. 4)

‘यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ॥’

(V. 5)

‘लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।’

(III. 3)

‘यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानम्’ should be taken to mean that ‘the goal which the Jñānī (follower of the path of Sāṅkhya) attains through Knowledge, the Karmayogī attains through attainment of Jñāna (Knowledge).’ It should not be construed to mean that Karma directly leads to liberation. Such an interpretation would militate against the statements quoted above. ‘लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा’ through this the Lord has no doubt pointed out that there were two disciplines. But that they are mutually independent ways to liberation is not the purport of this line. ‘तयोऽस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते’—this is meant for those who have not attained the required standard of purity and are not therefore qualified for Jñāna (Knowledge). On the basis of this interpretation alone it may be possible to reconcile the different statements and declarations. It is therefore that the Lord says:—

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ।

“The wise, the seers of the essence of things, will instruct thee in wisdom.” If it were possible to attain salvation through Karma alone, where was the necessity for Jñāna in the case of Arjuna, for which he was advised to approach Jñānīs and hear their instructions?

If the Lord held Karmayoga and Jñānayoga as mutually independent ways, how could He say: ‘संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः’ (Gītā V. 6)—without Karmayoga Saṁnyāsa (Jñāna) is difficult of attainment—which means in effect that Karma is the cause of Jñāna (Knowledge)?

Now, let us examine the validity of the view that through Jñāna (Knowledge) alone, and not through Karma, can liberation of God-realization be attained. If Mokṣa (salvation) were something like the attainment of heaven that can be brought about through performance of Yajña, etc., Karma would have been necessary, but in that case

Mokṣa itself would be limited by time, and therefore transitory. If Mokṣa were a state of transformation like curd or a pot of earth, then also Karma (action) would be necessary, but in that case, too, Mokṣa would be treated as something limited by time, and transitory. If, again, Mokṣa were a state of reformation, then also it would be necessary to have recourse to Karma. There are two processes through which reformation or improvement can be effected, viz., (1) assimilation of good qualities, and (2) rejection of evil. Mokṣa, which means realization of Brahma, is a state which is perfect in every way and therefore incapable of further improvement, and cannot be embellished by any virtue, nor can there be any evil attached to that state inasmuch as it is a state of eternal purity. If God were entirely different from us, Jīvas, or if He were possessed of any form similar to or different from ours in type, then also it might be possible to attain Him through physical, vocal or mental action; but God is our very Self.

‘अन्योऽसावन्योऽहमस्मीति न स वेद यथा पशुरेव ऽस देवानाम्।’

(Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad I.IV. 10)

‘तद्योऽहं सोऽसौ योऽसौ सोऽहम्।’

‘त्वं वा अहमस्मि भगवो देवतेऽहंवै त्वमसि’

‘वस्तुतस्तु त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः।’

“He is one thing and I am another—he who knows thus knows not; he is like animal meant for gods.”

“He is what I am and I am what He is.”

“O Lord, I am what Thou art and Thou art what I am.”

“In reality I am what thou art, this is my firm conviction.”

Even if He is recognized as different from us, He is all-pervading like the Ākāśa (space or ether)—

‘आकाशवत्सर्वगतश्च नित्यः।’

The analogy of Ākāśa (Ether), too, is not appropriate; for Ākāśa takes its origin from the Lord—

‘तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः सम्भूतः ।’

(Taittirīya Upaniṣad I.1)

अथवा बहूनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥

(Gītā X. 42)

तावानस्य महिमा ततो ज्यायांश्च पूरुषः ।
पादोऽस्य सर्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवीति ॥

(Chāndogya III. xii. 6)

यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान् ।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥

(Gītā IX. 6)

“From that Ātmā (Self or Spirit) sprang up space or ether.”

“Or what avails to know all this diversity, O Arjuna? (Know thou this) that I exist, supporting this whole world by a portion of Myself.”

“Of this magnitude is the greatness of the Puruṣa (Spirit) but He is ever greater than this greatness. One-fourth of Him forms all created objects, the Immortal three-fourths are in the region beyond.”

“Just as the mighty wind, moving always everywhere, rests ever in the Ākāśa, know thou that even so do all the elements (including the ether) rest in Me.”

In reality, however, even the elements are not in Me—‘न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि’—because creation itself is only an illusive appearance; hence the comparison between Ākāśa and God is made only in the metaphorical sense.

प्राणबुद्धिमनःस्वात्मदारापत्यधनादयः ।

यत्संपर्कात् प्रिया आसंस्ततः को न्वपरः प्रियः ॥

“Our life, our intellect, our very self, our wife, our children and our money—all this is dear to us because of their contact with Him; who else, then, can be dearer than He?”

Therefore, God, Who is the supreme object of love,

is always present with us? How can there be dependence on any Karma for His realization?

If the Ātmā (Jīva) were by its very nature subject to bondage, it could not divest itself of that character without losing its own identity; so that emancipation for the Jīva would have been impossible.

आत्मा कर्त्रादिरूपश्चेन्मा कांक्षीस्तर्हि मुक्तताम्।

(Sureśvarācārya)

आत्मानमेवात्मतयाविजानतां

तेनैव जातं निखिलं प्रपञ्चितम्।

ज्ञानेन भूयोऽपि च तत् प्रलीयते

रज्ज्वामहेर्भोगभवाभवौ यथा ॥

अज्ञानसंज्ञौ भवबन्धमोक्षौ

द्वौ नाम नान्यौ स्त ऋतज्ञभावात्।

अजस्रचित्यात्मनि केवले परे

विचार्यमाणे तरणाविवाहिनी ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X.XIV. 25-26)

“If the Ātmā (Self or Spirit) is by nature a doer etc., one should give up all hope of being emancipated: the inherent nature of an object cannot leave it just as heat does not leave the sun.”

“Those who do not know the Self in its true nature are brought face to face with this world of diversity through this ignorance. The world, however, disappears on the dawn of knowledge, just as a snake appears and then disappears in a rope.”

“Bondage and freedom from the same are named as such only through ignorance; in reality they are nothing apart from the self-existent and all-conscious Principle, viz., God. Just as day and night are assumed to have a separate existence from the sun, even so bondage and freedom are conceived in the Eternal All-conscious Supreme Absolute.”

This, however, should not be taken to mean that Jñānī

performs no actions, or that action becomes a source of bondage to him—

‘न कर्मणा वर्द्धते नो कनीयान्।’

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad)

‘इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन्॥

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः।

लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा॥’

(Gītā V. 9-10)

“(A knower) neither grows nor diminishes through action.” “The senses move among the objects of senses, such is his (knower’s) conviction”

“He who performs actions placing them in the Eternal, and abandoning attachment, is not affected by sin as a lotus-leaf by the waters.”

Considering these statements of the scriptures, my intellect refuses to accept the view that emancipation is possible through mere action (Karma). It is no doubt true that persons qualified to pursue the path of Jñāna are very rare in these days and those who simply renounce Karma (action) without realizing the Truth merely on hearing the above statements, are sure to go to terrible hells like Raurava. Moreover, it may be assumed that unless we uphold the view that Emancipation is attained through action without attachment (निष्काम कर्म) no one will entertain any respect for action without attachment, much less practise such action. And that action without attachment when properly pursued, is bound to lead to purification of the heart, and, once the heart has been purified, Emancipation is reached as an inevitable consequence through Jñāna (Knowledge). If you are led by these considerations, and if it is for the good of the public that you are advancing the view that Emancipation is reached

through action without attachment. I shall not raise any doubt or objection.

ANSWER

The following is a short reply to the question raised by the learned friend with reference to the view advanced in our previous article on Sāṅkhyayoga in the Gītā.

In the first place it is requested that our previous article should be read more carefully in order to be able to understand our viewpoint. It has nowhere been stated therein that even without Jñāna Emancipation may be attained through Karma alone. Sāṅkhyayoga and Karmayoga both have no doubt been described as paths of equal importance for attainment of Mokṣa (Liberation). This should, however, be understood to mean that just as an aspirant in the path of Jñāna (Knowledge) attains salvation along with true wisdom as the fruition of his spiritual endeavours, similarly an aspirant in the path of action without attachment also reaches salvation simultaneously with true Knowledge which represents the culmination of his efforts in the line of Karma. The difference between the two paths lies only during the stage of Sādhana. They both take to the same final goal. That is why the Lord says in the Gītā:—

सांख्ययोगौ पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः ।

यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ॥

(V. 4-5)

“It is ignorant, and not the wise who speak of the paths of Knowledge and Action as different (i.e. leading to different goals).”

“The same goal which is reached by the pursuers of the path of Knowledge is reached also by the followers of the path of Action”

After the attainment of perfect wisdom, there remains neither the path of Knowledge nor that of Karma without

attachment. That final stage marks the culmination of Sādhana on both these lines. The attainment of that Knowledge and the attainment of Mokṣa are not different states. The Lord has further said in the Gītā :—

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना।

अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे॥

(XIII. 24)

“Some behold the Self within themselves by meditation through purity of heart, others through the path of Knowledge, and still others through Karmayoga.”

This shows that attainment of Perfect Knowledge in the form of Self-realization is the result of spiritual effort on the lines of Knowledge and Action both. Therefore, our article referred to leaves no room for anyone to suspect that it has been urged therein that salvation is attainable even without Knowledge.

The statement of the Lord in the sixth verse of chapter 5 of the Gītā that complete renunciation of action, viz., the practice of Sāṅkhyayoga is difficult without the practice of Karmayoga does not prove that Karmayoga is not an independent method for attaining salvation. For the second line of the same verse says:—‘योगयुक्तो मुनिर्ब्रह्म नचिरेणाधिगच्छति,’ that is, ‘the man of meditation devoted to the path of action quickly attains Brahma.’ If this line is taken to mean that “he reaches Brahma through Sāṅkhyayoga (Yoga of Knowledge),” then the statement of the Lord ‘तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते’ (Karmayoga is superior to renunciation of action) loses all its value, and Karmayoga loses its status as an independent path of spiritual discipline. Such an interpretation would reduce Karmayoga to the position of an auxiliary of Sāṅkhyayoga (Yoga of Knowledge), which does not appear to be a reasonable view being opposed to the spirit of the teachings of the Lord.

The state of liberation is not the result of some action, therefore Action is not necessary for its attainment—this is perfectly true. But the great spiritual value of Karma without attachment is not due to any greatness of Karma as such; that value lies in the renunciation of desire, in the genuine spirit of offering everything to God. A Karma of the greatest magnitude rooted in desire will not lead to liberation, but an insignificant Karma performed without attachment will qualify one for attaining liberation. The value of Karma without attachment lies in the element of renunciation that is involved in it, and not in the element of Karma. The speciality of this method of spiritual discipline is that though engaged in the performance of all kinds of activities man does not get attached to them and that it enables even a householder without much difficulty to attain salvation through God's grace. The line of demarcation between these two different modes of spiritual discipline during the stage of Sādhana has been discussed at length in the previous article on this subject.

To attempt to establish that salvation is attainable through Karmayoga while it is not really so, simply in order that people may develop reverence for this path can in no way be conducive to their best interests. How, then, is it possible for the Lord Himself or for any man of wisdom, for that matter, to mislead people by any such declaration. To imagine with reference to the clearest statements of the Lord in praise of Karmayoga that the value of Karmayoga has been exaggerated in order to create a reverence for this path, does not appear to me a proper way of approach to the teachings of the Lord.

Highest Goal of Existence

A friend poses two questions—

Question 1— Through all your experiences of life—through study, hearing of and reflection on the teachings of the scriptures, through travel observation, association of saints, service of the Sadguru and your direct spiritual experiences, what goal has up to now appeared to you to be the highest goal of existence, the pursuit of which will satisfy all the requirements of a good life on earth, viz., pure conduct, performance of duties as man, attainment of Bliss, Yoga and liberation, advancement in every sphere of life—spiritual and worldly, the last including advancement of the family, community, nation, the world in general as well as the cause of social reform—The goal, which every man on earth can realize in life through a course of discipline which is easy to follow?

Answer 1—The goal about which you ask can be properly described by one who has himself realized it in life. Being an ordinary man of the world, I do not possess the knowledge that I may satisfy you with an answer. Neither have I made any deep study of the scriptures nor practised special hearing and reflection on them. Nor did I possess the privilege of Satsaṅga or of doing personal service to the Sadguru or any other saint, and of disciplining life according to his instructions to the extent one should do. Nor have I practised any deep meditation. I make a short attempt below to place before you what appears to me good and agreeable and what I hold to be the best ideal, according to my own poor light.

The highest truth, highest goal, highest Dharma and highest duty of man is to surrender himself wholly and exclusively to God, the embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss. Through practice of this as the supreme duty of life, he will easily become virtuous in conduct and possessing all the high qualities will attain peace and finally even the Bliss of Mokṣa. Good of the family, society, nation, the world at large and all forms of reform and advancement are possible of being secured through this and all men throughout the world can easily practise it; in fact, all men are qualified to practise it. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

“O Pārtha, women, Vaiśyas, Śūdras or products of the womb of sin, whoever among these takes refuge in Me attains the Supreme State.”¹

That is why Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa laid down this as His final instruction to Arjuna:—

“Abandoning all other duties, i.e., all dependence on Karma, come to Me alone for shelter; grieve not, I will liberate thee from all sins.”²

Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra also made a similar declaration:—

“He who approaching Me once says ‘O Lord ! I am Thine’ and thus seeks My shelter, I make him fearless

1. मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

(IX. 32)

2. सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 66)

about injury from any being whatsoever. This is My solemn promise.”¹

The Śrutis also say:—

“This Word (Om) is Brahma, this is the highest object, knowing this Word, whatever one desires, he attains. This Word is the best shelter, highest good lies in taking refuge under It; knowing the secret of this surrender, one receives homage and worship in Brahmaloaka.”²

Therefore, renouncing all false shame, fear, attachment, honour, prestige, egoism, senses of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and regarding God alone to be the Supreme Goal, Supreme Refuge, one should try to throw oneself wholly, with complete faith and reverence, through body, senses, mind and intellect at the mercy of the Lord, the Embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, Who is present everywhere in His manifest and unmanifest Forms.

CHARACTER OF EXCLUSIVE SURRENDER

(A) Practice of Japa of the Lord’s Name and meditation on His Form with full consciousness about its glory and secrets should be constantly carried on disinterestedly, with a heart full of love and reverence. There are many Names of God, such as—Hari, Om, Tatsat, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Śiva, etc. The Sādhaka should choose a Name according to his liking and taste, the Japa of which will become

- | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------|---|---------|
| 1. सकृदेव | प्रपन्नाय | तवास्मीति | च | याचते । |
| अभयं | सर्वभूतेभ्यो | ददाम्येतद्ब्रतं | | मम ॥ |

(Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa VI.xviii.33)

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 2. एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं | ब्रह्म | एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं | परम् । |
| एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं | ज्ञात्वा यो | यदिच्छति | तस्य तत् ॥ |
| एतदालम्बनं | श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं | | परम् । |
| एतदालम्बनं | ज्ञात्वा | ब्रह्मलोके | महीयते ॥ |

particularly helpful to him. There are two aspects of God—(1) beyond attributes (Nirguṇa), and (2) with attributes (Saguṇa). Between them meditation on the Nirguṇa (transcendent aspect) is not possible. Whatever meditation is made, is made only of the Saguṇa aspect of God. Saguṇa, again, may be divided into two aspects—(1) Unmanifest and (2) Manifest. In other words, one is without Form, and the other is with form. He from Whom creation begins and in Whom it finally dissolves when there is universal destruction, Who exists everywhere equally pervading everything, Who is not destroyed when the whole creation is destroyed—this aspect of the Paramātmā, Unmanifest, All-pervading, Eternal, Embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss, is called Formless Brahma. That very Paramātmā when He incarnates Himself in the form of a human or celestial being for the redemption of the world, and propagates ideas of knowledge, dispassion, devotion, virtuous conduct, etc., that Form of the Lord, the very Embodiment of Love, Compassion and Bliss, is called Brahma with a Form. Among the various Forms manifested by the Lord, the meditation of one for which the aspirant possesses reverence and love will be particularly helpful to him.

(B) One should constantly try to mould his conduct according to the instructions and will of the Lord. That is to say, he should promptly carry out whatever is favourable and dear to the Lord. He should regard the scriptures and teachings of saints as authoritative as the teachings of God, and try always to follow as the will of God and as his most sacred duty whatever appears to his dispassionate mind to be true through a careful reflection on such teachings. The saint, whether ancient or modern,

whether dead or living, who stands highest in his estimation and whose physical marks and conduct satisfy the scriptural tests, is the real Mahātmā or saint for him. The Śrutis, Smṛtis, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and other books composed by the Ṛṣis constitute true scriptures. Besides these, books and teachings left by saints for whom one cherishes reverence and devotion will also be regarded as true scripture for him. In the present age, the Bhagavadgītā, which contains the essence of the Śrutis, Smṛtis, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and other scriptures, may be taken as the most non-sectarian and universal book of religion. That is why it has been said with reference to the Gītā—

“The study of the Gītā, which has come out of the lotus-like face of Bhagavān Viṣṇu Himself, closely and with careful reflection on its meanings, is a sacred duty. What is the use of taking pains on many other scriptures?”*

Therefore, if it is not possible to study the scriptures, one should make it a point to study at least the Gītā.

(C) One should constantly maintain joy in his heart through all experiences of happiness and misery, or acquirement of objects which contribute to happiness or misery, and through every gain and loss, regarding that to have taken place according to the dispensation of the Lord, Who is Supremely Compassionate, Almighty and Just. That is to say, he should be constantly absorbed in joy through realization at every step of the compassion of that sole object of Love, that ocean of compassion, whatever the circumstances he may find himself face to

* गीता सुगीता कर्तव्या किमन्यैः शास्त्रसंग्रहैः ।
या स्वयं पद्मनाभस्य मुखपद्माद्विनिःसृता ॥

(Bhīṣma-Parva 43.1)

face with according to his Prārabdha, i. e., circumstances brought about through the initiative of another, without any inclination or desire of his own.

(D) One should not regard any object of the world as his own property or as an object of enjoyment. For the fact of the matter is that as all objects proceed from Nārāyaṇa, they belong to Nārāyaṇa Himself. Therefore withdrawing the attachment of the heart from them, all objects should be offered to Nārāyaṇa. That is to say, according to the instruction of Nārāyaṇa, they should be all employed in the service of Nārāyaṇa.

In short, understanding of the mystery, glory and truth of God through the intellect; meditation on the Lord's Form with a heart full of reverence and love; practice of Japa of the Divine Name with the rhythm of respiration; engaging the ears to the hearing of the virtues, power and transcendent glory of the Form of the Lord; employing the eyes to see the images of the Lord or His devotees or to the study of noble scriptures; engaging the speech in Kīrtana of His glories; engaging the body to the service of God and His devotees, to worship, salutation and performance of action surrendering one's personal will to the will of the Lord, in the spirit of only carrying out His wishes, without desire for fruit and renouncing idleness—this is what is called practice of exclusive surrender to God.

The more there is progress in the practice as stated above, the more will man develop fortitude, heroism, gravity, fearlessness, forgiveness, compassion, contentment, equanimity and similar other virtues like tranquillity, self-control, austerity, charity, renunciation, service of others, truth, brahmacarya, etc., and the more he will gain Peace

and Supreme Bliss. Thus rising higher and higher, he will ultimately reach through Divine Grace the highest limit of growth, which is the same as attainment of the Supreme Abode, the Supreme State, the Supreme Goal, or God-realization. When he reaches that state, there remains no duty for him left undone.

Question 2—How should a man divide the hours of the day and employ them in various activities like service of the soul, family, community, nation, the world at large and earning of livelihood, etc., so that he may serve both worldly and spiritual interests? How much time and wealth should he spend for his physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual growth so that he may have an all-round development and his labour and expenses may become really fruitful?

Answer 2—The value of time is extremely great. A moment of life already spent cannot be called back even if you spend lakhs and lakhs of rupees for it. Not a single moment of this valuable human life should be wasted through careless living, lethargy, in the commission of sin, and in pursuit of the worthless enjoyments of life. He who idly wastes this life without proper consideration of its value is bound to repent for it in future. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī said:—

“He will suffer in the other world and will repent striking his forehead repeatedly with the palm of his hand, falsely accusing Time, Karma and God for his sufferings.”*

“He who acts without thought has to repent subsequently for his action;

* सो परत्र दुख पावई सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोष लगाइ ॥

He spoils his own future and becomes a laughing-stock of the world.

Becoming the laughing-stock of others, he feels restless in mind and loses taste for food, drink, honour and joys and pleasures of the world.

Says Poet Giradhara, man cannot avoid the effect of action, however much he may try to do so.

His heart will always pinch, remembering every action done without proper thought.”*

Therefore man should spend every moment of life in the practice of the duty of self-surrender as set forth above. Before deciding to do anything, let him carefully scrutinize whether the action he contemplates will serve his best interests. He should rectify his error the moment he detects it.

Through such careful use of time even his ordinary interests will be transformed into spiritual interests and all his actions will meet with success. In other words, he will gain the object of life.

In the division of time for the performance of duties there is likely to be difference owing to the position of a man according to Varṇāśrama or to difference in the inherent nature of every individual. Therefore, it is not possible to make a uniform time-table for all. Everyone should exercise his intellect and make a time-table suited to his own convenience keeping the above facts and ideals in view. For

* बिना बिचारे जो करै, सो पाछे पछिताय ।
 काम बिगारै आपनो, जग में होत हँसाय ॥
 जग में होत हँसाय चित्त में चैन न पावै ।
 खान-पान, सनमान, राग-रँग मन नहिं भावै ॥
 कह गिरधर कविराय करमगति टरत न टारे ।
 खटकत है जिय माँहि कियौ जो बिना बिचारे ॥

the satisfaction of the questioner, however, a few suggestions are made below about the division of the day's hours for the performance of different types of duties.

The Lord said in the Gītā:—

“Yoga, which puts an end to all sorrows, becomes successful in the case of one who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all his actions, and who is regulated in sleep and waking.” *

Careful thought on the above verse of the Gītā will bring us to the following conclusion. Everyone can generally divide the twenty-four hours of the day into four equal parts. Thus he may devote six hours to service of others and to taking of food and rest, etc., in order to keep the body in health; six hours to earning of livelihood; six hours to sleep and six hours to practice of Yoga for Self-realization. In other words, he should devote six hours to service including service to his body, service to family members and service to the public at large. On special occasions, time allotted to other work may be devoted to public service or the service of family members. Six hours should be devoted to work, without any desire for fruit and without any attachment, in the spirit of performance of duty, according to the injunctions of Varṇāśrama with a view to please God thereby, and thus earn one's livelihood by lawful means. Six hours should be spent in sleep and six hours to practices for Self-realization. These last six hours, he should spend alone withdrawing his senses, mind and intellect from all worldly contacts. He should devote the time only

* युक्ताहारविहारस्य	युक्तचेष्टस्य	कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य	योगो भवति	दुःखहा ॥

to practice of Japa, meditation on the Divine Form, hearing of spiritual discourses in Satsaṅga, or the study of scriptures. The above four divisions of time may be arranged according to the following daily routine of life.

DAILY ROUTINE

One should leave the bed at least an hour and a half before sunrise. If one gets up at 4 in the morning, he will be ready by 5 A.M. after a short meditation and the performance of necessary ablutions and bath, etc. From 5 to 8 A.M. he should retire to his room of worship and devote the time entirely to Bhajana and Meditation. From 8 to 10 A.M. he may do some public work and then take his food and look after the requirements of his health. From 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. he may devote the time to earning of livelihood by just and lawful means according to the injunctions of the Varnāśrama. From 4 to 6 P.M. he may devote, again, to public service according to his capacity. From 6 to 9 P.M. he may retire to the room of worship and spend the time, again, in Bhajana, Meditation or the hearing and the study of the scriptures, or generally in the practices of worship, 9 P.M. to 10 P.M. he may take his last meal and look to the requirements of the body, 10 P.M. to 4 A.M. he may spend in sleep.

This time-table may be altered according to the taste and convenience of every individual. Owing to the differences of country, race, habits of life, etc., it is not possible to frame a common time-table for all.

For the maintenance to the body and members of the family, the budget of expenditure should be as low as possible. Care should be taken that the budget may not unnecessarily grow. The savings effected thereby should be

spent for the service of Devas, Pitrs, men and other creatures according to the injunction of the scriptures and dictates of the Varnāśrama Dharma, without any thought of self interest.

It should be specially borne in mind that the practice of Japa of the Divine Name and the meditation on the Divine Form should be carried on constantly; that is to say, all other activities of life, personal, social, public, etc., should be pursued together with the constant practice of Japa and meditation on the Divine Form.

The Lord said in the Gītā:—

“Therefore, O Arjuna, constantly remember Me and fight. With your mind and intellect thus offered to Me, you will certainly come to me.”¹

Again:—

“Thus mentally offering all actions to Me, and devoting yourself wholly to Me, and resorting to Karmayoga in the form of equanimity of mind, have your thought constantly fixed on Me.”²

He who follows these injunctions will find that all his activities—physical, mental and intellectual, etc.,—have got reformed, that all his time, labour and money have been well spent, and through the grace of God he will soon easily attain Supreme Peace and Supreme Joy; in other words, realize the Supreme State.

□□

1. तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च । मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(VIII. 7)

2. चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः । बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥

(XVIII. 57)

A Few Thoughts on Liberation

The Self is happiness itself. And it is happiness that everybody seeks in the world. There is none who would welcome grief. “Let there be happiness for me, and let no grief ever befall me” (सुखं मे भूयात् दुःखं मे मा स्म भूत्) is the desire which springs in every heart. Happiness lies in what we like and grief in what we dislike. So happiness and grief have been defined by the Śāstras as “अनुकूलवेदनीयं सुखम्, प्रतिकूलवेदनीयं दुःखम्”— “Agreeable sensation is happiness. Disagreeable sensation is grief.” Nobody is satisfied here on earth with his own conditions. He who possesses a hundred rupees desires to have a thousand. And he who has got a thousand, seeks to possess a million. A millionaire would like to be a multi-millionaire and the multi-millionaire would like to be a king. The king hankers after an empire and an emperor after the overlordship of the whole world. The overlord of the whole world would not rest satisfied with his lot but would hanker after the status of Indra, the lord of gods. So goes on the race and everybody would have increasingly more and more of happiness. Nobody is satisfied with the little he possesses ‘नाल्पे सुखमस्ति। भूमैव सुखम्’— “There is no happiness in what is finite. In infinity lies happiness”, says the Śruti. Thus, we all seek constant, boundless and eternal happiness, unalloyed with any kind of grief, complete by itself and unsurpassed by any other form of happiness. Every Jīva is in search of this kind of happiness and so long as he does not possess it, his wanderings do not cease. This infinite happiness is the ultimate goal of the Jīva. It is this which is variously called as liberation, salvation, the

highest consummation or the Supreme Beatitude. He who possesses it, fulfils the object of his life. There remains neither any duty left for him, nor anything more to gain. This is the highest limit of happiness, the Supreme Goal.

There is behind this life of conflict and turmoil a state of happiness where all difficulties are automatically solved, all miseries come to an end without any trace behind, all pains and sufferings, worries and fears disappear. All men of thought, theistic and non-theistic alike, believe in the truth of this fact. But as to the real nature of that state, opinions very largely differ. Some people regard Svarga, (Paradise) as the place where happiness has reached its highest limit. But this celestial happiness is also perishable, it is not eternal and imperishable. In the Vedas we find it mentioned that those who performed the Soma sacrifice drank the Soma nectar and became immortal 'अपाम् सोमममृता अभूम्'; but this immortality possessed as the result of Soma and other sacrifices, though more lasting than our life on the earth, is also relative. The gods live a much more longer life than we live, but that life also has an end. The meritorious deeds, which take one to heaven, are gradually consumed by the enjoyment of that life and souls who have thus enjoyed and consumed the merit, are flung down from heaven. They are then required to take birth in this world of mortals. "When the stock of their merits is exhausted, they come back to this world of death", says the Gītā (IX.21). Elsewhere also the Gītā says that all existences up to the Brahmaloṅka, the region of Brahmā, are subject to appearance and disappearance (VIII. 16); all beings inhabiting them are, after a fixed period, thrown down into the mortal world.

In the heaven and other higher worlds, there is an abundance of uninterrupted happiness, but it is not equally the same for all. The length of life varies with the merit which each god possesses. The greater the merit, the longer the life. Indra lives infinitely longer than any other god and possesses an infinitely larger number of objects for enjoyment than other gods. These inequities obtaining in those heavenly worlds create feelings of jealousy and malice in those who inhabit them which constantly burn their hearts. In addition to malice they hanker after more and more happiness and are in constant dread of losing what they already possess. The fear of his status being assailed and captured haunts Indra day and night and he cannot look with equanimity upon any man doing severe austerities on earth, for he suspects in all such cases that the motive of the Sādhaka is to overthrow him. It is, therefore, that Indra is always preoccupied with efforts to mislead men of austerities and put obstacles in their path. All this proves that the happiness of heaven, though a very lofty thing in the eyes of men, is by no means boundless and entire. Thus for the seekers of integral happiness, it is not a thing worthy of being sought after.

According to the doctrine of Vedānta, Brahma alone is the boundless whole, happiness itself. It is only when the Jīva establishes complete identity with Brahma that he gains freedom from sufferings and bondage and attains Supreme Peace. He then transcends the fear of birth and death and rises above joy and sorrow, 'हर्षशोकौ जहाति'. His ignorance gets destroyed for ever, the knot of nescience is untied, all doubts are dispelled, all afflictions come to an end. No duty in this world is left for him.

Even when God is realized not as the same as Self but distinct from it, man gets freed from the bondage of birth, death and afflictions and lives in his divine body in the eternal Divine Abode of God as Qualified Divinity and enjoys the bliss of nearness to Him. The liberation attained by this form of distinctive worship (भेदोपासना) is of four kinds: Sālokya (residence in the abode of the Divine), Sāmīpya (nearness to Him), Sārūpya (attainment of the same form as that of the Divine) and Sāyujya (complete absorption in the Divine). Any of these four kinds of liberation when attained, has the power to free the soul for ever from the cycle of birth and death and bring to it the eternal joy of boundless bliss. This is the state to which the Yogīs aspire to rise, and this is the ultimate goal of every living being. The purpose for which God kindly gives us a human body is to attain this end; for it is only the human body and no other, which is qualified to make this effort. Possessed of the human body, we should, therefore, strive to gain this end. Therein lies the fulfilment of its object. Happiness derived from enjoyment of the senses can be gained even in bodies of animals, birds and other creatures. If it were possible for objective happiness to bring satisfaction to man, we would have been satisfied long ago; for we have lived many lives, lives of all kinds of creatures and have indulged in pleasures of senses, all of which proves that there is no happiness in these pleasures. Happiness lies in their renunciation. We should, therefore, abandon all attachment to the objects of sense-pleasure and whole-heartedly seek the attainment of perfect Bliss either by disinterested action,

or devotion, or knowledge and attempt to reach the goal in this very life-time. For it is not known whether or not we shall have this opportunity again. The Śāstras speak of human life as so valuable that even the gods crave for it. When wandering helplessly through all strata of life the Jīva feels utterly exhausted, then God takes pity on him and gives him a human body, thus affording him a precious opportunity to free himself from the bondage of birth and death. But the Jīva loses this opportunity ungratefully and feels repentant in the end. But of what avail is such belated repentance?

With regard to the real nature of liberation, many problems and doubts arise in the minds of men. Some people do not believe it to be a state from which there is no return. They hold that the liberated soul does not return to this world only until the advent of universal destruction, which means, in other words, that their liberation lasts only till that event. After universal dissolution, when the process of creation begins anew, the liberated souls return to this world together with other nature-bound souls. For, they argue that if it were admitted that the liberated do not return, we have to anticipate a day when all souls will have been liberated, and therefore there will be no creation at all. But creation, they contend, has been in existence from a dateless or beginningless past and all souls must have been liberated by this time; but creation is not yet extinct, which goes to prove that all liberated souls come back to this world when creation starts anew and thus the whole world-process continues.

In reply to this, it may be pointed out that if a time-limit is imposed on liberation, that liberation would

not be anything better or different in kind than existence in heaven. Celestial beings, though they live much longer than us, are subject to death. Even so liberation as stated above, although it involves a life much longer than that of Indra and other gods, eventually comes to an end. We cannot call it Eternal Happiness. And inasmuch as it is a relative and perishable existence it proves itself unworthy as the goal of life, and will be declared as but an aspect of the movement of birth and death. In that case, the idea of everlasting happiness for the soul would appear to be only a dream and a mirage, a thing never to be realized. In other words, it means the wanderings of the Jīva will never cease, it will continue from eternity to eternity, and the Jīva will never be able to partake of Eternal Bliss. It will be, however, wrong to accept this proposition. We have the authority of the Śruti which says:—

‘न च पुनरावर्तते न च पुनरावर्तते’।

“He does not return, he does not return.”

Similarly, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

‘मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते’।

(VIII. 16)

“Attaining Me, there is no rebirth.”

‘गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः’ ॥

(V. 17)

“Their sins being completely shaken off by wisdom, they go whence there is no return.”

If we try to base our conclusion on reasoning alone, it will be found that it supports our point of view. Even if we admit for a moment that both these doctrines are equally contentious and that it is a matter open to

controversy, whether the liberated soul returns to the earth or not, this much is certain that to accept the doctrine of non-return is more advantageous, reasonable, agreeable and secure. For if we believe in the doctrine that the liberated soul never returns, he gets for ever freed from the cycle of births and deaths and becomes partaker of Eternal Happiness, we shall on the strength of that belief make a whole-hearted effort to achieve that state. And if that state is really attainable and we continue in our effort without slackening, we shall, some day here in this life, or failing that in some future life, succeed in attaining it. Let us admit, for argument's sake, that the liberated is subject to rebirth, and that those who disbelieve it are sadly mistaken. But what do they stand to lose by subscribing to this mistake? According to this point of view, both of them who believe in the theory of non-return and those who believe in unavoidable rebirth, are bound to return. Their belief and disbelief will not produce any difference in the result. But if the fact be otherwise, if the theory of non-return is true, the error of the protagonist of the return-theory will undoubtedly place him at a disadvantage. For having no faith in that complete state of liberation he will never be able to reach it. If our conception of liberation is that even in the liberated state rebirth is unavoidable, we shall ever remain deprived of real liberation, which never comes to an end; for a state whose existence we disbelieve will ever remain lost to us. We cannot, in the first instance, make any effort to reach it; but even if we make the effort, it will not be whole-hearted and therefore success will not attend it. If in that case we get any liberation at all, it will be of the

type for which we have faith. In other words, we shall never attain the state from which there is no return.

Coming next to the contention that if liberated souls do not return to this world, a day will arrive when all souls will find themselves liberated to the utter extinction of creation, we ask where is the harm if such a thing comes to pass. We have, however, to remember, firstly, that the number of souls who are likely to be liberated from among those who inhabit the world is not like even a drop of water taken out of the vast ocean; for the right to liberation rests solely with man, who forms a very small fraction of the total of beings in creation. In the present age, the human population will not exceed six hundred crores out of which only a few, say a rare one in a thousand, as says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā (VII. 3), make any effort to attain perfection and out of these few, the rarest ones actually attain it. Now, when we compare this with the number of sub-human creatures, we shall be surprised to note that little ants in a single small garden will perhaps far exceed the number of human population in the whole world. When the entire human population compared to the number of ants alone appears like a drop of water taken out of the ocean, the number of liberated souls compared to the infinite number of sentient and non-sentient beings of the whole cosmos must be even less than a drop. To contend, therefore, that if the process of liberation continues and liberated souls do not return, the souls will exhaust their number is to declare that the pumping out of water of an ocean by an ant will one day dry up the ocean. But suppose this actually takes place, it is a consummation which should be desired by

us; all great saints in the past have sought this consummation, in the present they are all seeking it, and in future also they will seek it. If their efforts are crowned with success at any moment of time and all souls are delivered from bondage, the event should be welcome to us. What is there to object to this? Our progenitors, the ancient Ṛṣis, have prayed for all beings without any exception:—

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ॥

“Let all beings be happy, let all be free from ailment; let all see goodness everywhere, and let there be none to grieve.”

The second question that is raised with reference to liberation, is whether or not a man can reach this state, while yet in his body. There are some who say that liberation while living in the body is impossible. But the Śruti, Smṛti and the Gītā do not support that view and authoritatively declare that it is quite possible. In this very life Brahma is realized.’ ‘अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते’—‘Even here is the mortal plane conquered by them.’ ‘इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो’ (V. 19). These and other passages from the Śruti and the Gītā can be quoted to prove it. History also abounds with instances of great liberated souls who lived in the world unattached as lotus-leaf on water. They were, while yet living in the body, delivered from the three sheaths—the material, the subtle and the causal—and entirely free from all mental deformation of grief and joy attendant on favourable or adverse circumstances. The characteristics of these free souls have been described in the Gītā in detail as Sthitaprajñas (men of stable wisdom) in the second chapter, as Bhaktas or devotees in the twelfth chapter and

as Guṇātītas (men beyond the modes of nature) in the fourteenth chapter. We find them amply described in other books of scripture as well.

Some people hold the view that even after the Supreme Self is realized, man may be subject to the mental deformations of lust, anger and greed and may commit such prohibited and sinful acts as utterance of lies, practices of deception, theft, adultery, drinking, etc. But we think, this is not a right view. The man of realization, no doubt, rises above the duality of right and wrong, good and evil and no duty of his is left undone; but there is no meaning in imagining that he may be guilty of any prohibited action. Apart from sinful actions, the scriptures as well as reasoning clearly establish that even the deformations of lust and anger cannot remain in his mind. All prohibited actions spring from desire (III. 37), the root of desire lies in attachment and attachment proceeds from ignorance. If, therefore, we admit that the man of realization is subject to attachment, where will lie the difference between a man of realization and a man under the clutches of delusion? Let alone the man of realization, lust, anger and similar deformations of mind have to be abandoned even by the ordinary Sādhaka; then alone he becomes qualified to tread the path of Bliss. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
 कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥
 एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।
 आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥

(XVI. 21-22)

“Lust, anger and greed: these three are the gates to

hell leading to the ruin of the soul. Therefore, man should renounce all these three. Freed from these three gates of darkness man brings about his own welfare and reaches the highest goal, i.e., attains Me.”

Elsewhere also the man of realization has been described as ‘devoid of lust and anger’, कामक्रोधवियुक्तानाम्— (Gītā V. 26). Even the very relish of sense-objects by the man of realization disappears, when he sees the Supreme,” ‘रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते’ (Gītā II. 59). Under the circumstances no ground is left for the man of realization to be guilty of any wrong action. Thus we must accept this conclusion as certain that lust and anger or any other mental deformation cannot exist in the man of realization and no sinful action can ever be committed by him.

There is a section of opinion which holds that the present age is not the right age for attainment of liberation; for in the age of Kali no liberation is possible. Some others advance the view that only Saṁnyāsīs who have renounced their home are entitled to attain liberation, and others are not. But this view also does not appear reasonable. The age of Kali has been very highly extolled by the Śāstras:—

स्वल्पेनैव प्रयत्नेन धर्मः सिद्ध्यति वै कलौ ।
नरैरात्मगुणाम्भोभिः क्षालिताखिलकिल्बिषैः ॥

(Viṣṇu Purāṇa VI.ii. 34)

“Adopting the virtuous mode of life and freed from all sins, man may attain perfection in the age of Kali by making even a slight effort.”

कृते यद्ध्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः ।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्धरिकीर्तनात् ॥

“What was achieved by meditation in the Kṛta age, by sacrifices in the age of Tretā, by worship in the age

of Dvāpara, is achieved in the age of Kali by Kīrtana of the Divine Name.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa repeats the same idea in his own inimitable way:—

कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास ।

गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास ॥

“There is no age like the age of Kali. If only one possesses faith, he can cross the ocean of worldly existence without an effort merely by singing the glory of the stainless virtues of Śrī Rāma.”

If in spite of all this one clings to the belief that there can be no salvation in the present age, it means that he denies the authority of the Śāstras and closes for himself the door to salvation. For holding this view he can have no urge to realize it. But if the assurances of the scriptures prove genuine and liberation becomes possible even in this age, he will remain deprived of it. On the other hand, he who believes that salvation is possible in this age will try for it and if his efforts are rightly directed may attain it. Even admitting for the sake of argument that liberation is not possible in this age, he will lose nothing by making the effort. For he will pass a peaceful life, he will refrain from vices and sinful indulgences, no new sin, no wrong being added a bright future will await him, the world will hold him in honour, the prestige of Dharma will be established by him and thus he will be a source of utmost good to the people; he will have nothing to lose, but everything to gain. Thus it is the best, from the points of view of both scriptures and reasoning, to believe that liberation is possible in this age, and to make a whole-hearted effort to attain it. Knowledge and devotion, these

two are the principal means of attaining it and there is no restriction of time and place for the practice of these two disciplines. The present age has produced many Mahātmās who possessed perfect knowledge and devotion and even today they have not become wholly extinct in the world.

Now the next point for consideration is whether the Gr̥hastha or householder is entitled to have the Bliss of Liberation. In this respect too, the eternal doctrine of the Vedas is most comprehensive and all-embracing. According to it, every human being is entitled to liberation and God-realization. There is no restriction of class or order, race or creed with reference to this realization. It has already been pointed out that knowledge and devotion are the two principal means of liberation and men of all classes, colours, orders, races and creeds are free to practise them. Every being is a child of the Lord, all are His eternal portions, therefore all can equally claim the right to find and reach Him. Sub-human creatures lacking as they do the discriminating mind and the qualification to practise spiritual discipline, remain deprived of this highest object of life. Otherwise none is debarred from entering His presence, the gate of the Lord's Abode is wide open for all, His blessed hand is spread equally on all. All Jīvas are entitled to His grace. If it can be made possible for sub-human creatures to follow the disciplines of knowledge and devotion, they too will not remain deprived of the privilege of gaining salvation. There are instances of monkeys, bears, eagles and crows who having received the grace of God, were able to realize the Self and even deliver others from bondage. Then, where lies the difficulty

with men? Even women, Vaiśyas, Śūdras, and those born of the womb of sin like Cāṇḍālas have an inherent right, according to the Lord, to seek and find the supreme goal (Gītā IX. 32), what again need be said about Brāhmaṇas and men of other high castes. History records the instances of the Gopīs as the greatest of devotees among women, the Gopas with their lord Nanda, among the Vaiśyas, Sañjaya among the Śūdras and Guha-Niṣāda and others belonging to the aboriginal tribes.

It is, no doubt, easier for the Saṁnyāsī than the householder, and for the Brāhmaṇa than men of other castes, to attain liberation; but to say that the householder has no right to liberation is wholly wrong. The Lord has Himself spoken of Janaka and other royal sages, who attained perfection only by following the Path of Action. He further declared that by devotion to one's duty one can attain perfection (Gītā XVIII. 45). In the course of His exposition on the value of Karmayoga the Lord, again, says that he who is without fire is not a Saṁnyāsī; nor he who is without action is a Yogī; on the contrary, he who does his apportioned duty without expecting the fruit of action is a Saṁnyāsī; and a Yogī (VI. 1). To say, therefore, that the householder has no right to salvation is not at all supported by the scriptures.

If we look at the question from the standpoint of reason, we shall find that the view advanced above is supported by reason. Let us imagine for a moment that attainment of liberation for the householder is not a certainty. But even in that state of uncertainty, the best thing for us will be to believe that a householder can attain liberation. For if we continue to devote our time and

efforts to gain salvation and the goal is not actually reached, we do not suffer any loss; on the other hand, gain from every point of view, inasmuch as we have made the best use of our life, time and energy. But, reversely, if liberation be attainable and we remain idle and indifferent under the belief that a householder is not entitled to liberation, we face incalculable loss. We wholly lose the prospect of liberation in the present life, and about the future there is no definite guarantee; it is not even known into what species of beings we shall be thrown after death. "If the Supreme is realized in this very life, well and good; if not, it is a severe loss;" says the Śruti, 'इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः'. We should, therefore, devote ourselves to the attainment of liberation with the faith and will that whatever our Caste, Āśrama and condition of life may be, we can realize God from that very position in our present life. A sincere will carries immense strength with it. Relying on the grace of God, if we persevere and put our whole heart into the effort, we shall, by His grace, succeed and reach the Highest Goal of life and fulfil the object of our existence in this very life.



The Other World and Rebirth

We shall now attempt to establish the existence of the other world and rebirth by logical arguments—

(1) Like the physical body, the soul, *Ātmā* is not subject to change. We all see that according to age our bodies undergo various forms of change. The body we possess today will be a wholly different body a few years hence; practically a new body will take its place—just as nails and hair are cut and are replaced by new nails and hair. In our childhood the limbs are soft and short, the stature is short, the voice is sweet, the weight is less, and there are no marks of hair on the face. When we attain youth the limbs become hard and grow in length, the voice becomes heavy, the stature becomes long, the weight increases and beard and whiskers grow on the face. In the same way, in old age the limbs become weak, the grace of the body is lost, the skin hangs loose, hairs turn grey, the teeth become weak and are lost and the body and senses lose their strength. This is why we do not easily recognize a youth whom we knew only in childhood. But with changes in the body, the soul does not change. The soul we possessed ten years ago, we possess even now. It has undergone no change. If it underwent change, we would not remember incidents in our life which happened ten or twenty years ago. Just as we cannot remember the pleasure and pain experienced by another person, even so if our soul had been subject to any change, we could not be able, after years, to call to mind facts which happened in our life. But, as a matter of fact, we remember the incidents of today ten or even twenty years after; this

shows that he who experiences and he who remembers are not two different individuals, but one and the same. Just as with changes in the physical body, the soul did not change, even so it does not change when one takes a new body after death. This proves that the soul is immortal.

(2) Man never feels he will be non-existent; he can never imagine that he will one day cease to exist, or that there was a time when he did not exist. No confirmation is ever received from the soul about his non-existence. On the contrary, he feels that he existed and will exist forever. This also proves the immortality of the soul.

(3) As soon as a child takes its birth, it cries; after birth, now it smiles, now weeps and now goes into sleep; when the mother gives it the breast, it begins to suck her milk, and when threatened it is found to shake in terror. All this behaviour of the child points to a previous birth. For it never learnt these things in its present birth. They take place automatically owing to the force of habit of the previous incarnation. It smiles and weeps remembering previous experiences of pleasure and pain, and trembles in terror owing to fear of death experienced before. It likewise sucks the mother's milk because of the experience of sucking milk gained in the previous existence.

(4) Difference in the amount of happiness and sorrow among Jīvas—differences in nature, i.e., character and constitution of Guṇas and Karma—disparity about possession of lust, anger, likes and dislikes and differences in conduct and intellect that are noticed—all these also go to prove the existence of a previous birth. In these matters children of the same parents—and, what is more, even

twins are found to exhibit characteristics which are distinct from one another. There can be no reason for this disparity except the impressions of the previous birth. Just as when we hear a gramophone record we can guess that the song heard must have been sung somewhere by the singer, that is how we are able to hear its echo, even so when we observe an individual either happy or sorry, possessing either good or evil conduct and bearing an intellect which is either good or bad, we can guess that all this only reflected the Karmas of his former birth, the impressions of which were stored in his mind and which he has brought over with him in the present existence. If we find somebody happy in the present birth, it may be taken as an indication that he committed many virtuous acts in past life, and if we find anybody unhappy, it may be taken to indicate that he was guilty of inauspicious deeds. The differences in nature, constitution of Guṇas and intellect, etc., among men should be understood on this analogy.

If it is asked, where is the need for recognizing previous birth because of the differences in the impressions and characteristics, why should it not be explained as Divine Will, the answer is that if God is held to be the cause of this diversity, He will appear to be guilty of partiality and cruelty. The charge of partiality will be brought against Him, because out of His Will He made some people happy and some miserable. And the charge of cruelty will be similarly laid at His door because He made people miserable without any rhyme or reason. No such guilt can be attached to God; therefore, the differences in the characteristics and experiences of men must be held to be due to the Karmas of their past lives.

These arguments establish that all living beings are subject to reincarnation. If it is so, the question will next arise—what is man's duty under the circumstance? Consideration of the question will make it clear that the goal of life of every Jīva is the attainment of eternal, supreme bliss and release from suffering for all time, and it is man's duty to realize that goal. The scriptures describe reincarnation as the source of misery and God-realization as the only means of release from this suffering. In the Gītā Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says—

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।
नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥

(VIII. 15)

“The Mahātmās who have reached supreme perfection, having come to Me, are never subjected to rebirth, which is the abode of grief and impermanence.”

This proves that God-realization is the only means of permanent release from misery, and that such realization is possible in the human birth alone, therefore, he who endowed with this birth makes the best use of it by realizing God, he alone is blessed in the world, he alone is wise and clever. He, who wastes the human birth in worldly enjoyments, is a blockhead, the scriptures describe him as ungrateful, a slayer of the self. In the Bhāgavata, the Lord addressing Uddhava says—

नृदेहमाद्यं सुलभं सुदुर्लभं
प्लवं सुकल्पं गुरुकर्णधारम् ।
मयानुकूलेन नभस्वतेरितं
पुमान् भवाब्धिं न तरेत्स आत्महा ॥

(XI.xx. 17)

“Though this human body is the source of all

auspicious results and extremely difficult to secure, it has easily fallen to our lot through the grace of God; it is like a strong boat to cross the sea of Saṁsāra; the Guru is its pilot and I (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) acting as the favourable wind push it on. He who though possessed of such a beautiful boat does not cross the sea of Saṁsāra, he verily kills himself, i.e., degrades himself.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa-jī also says—

जो न तै भवसागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।
सो कृतनिंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa)

“He who though equipped with the human body fails to cross the ocean of existence, is an ungrateful wretch who meets the fate of those who kill themselves.”

Here the question arises—what should we do to attain this object? The answer to this we get as follows, in the words of the Lord—

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं

नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

(Gītā VI. 5)

“One should deliver oneself from the ocean of worldly existence, and should not lower oneself.”

‘Deliverance’ means acquisition of virtues and elevating sentiments, and practice of praiseworthy conduct, and ‘fall’ means practice of vices and evil conduct. For these are the elements which contribute to man’s reaching either a higher or lower state. The Lord classified and described them in the sixteenth chapter of the Gītā as the divine and demoniac qualifications, and He pointed out that the divine qualifications lead towards Mokṣa or liberation, and the demoniac qualifications throw one, again and again, into bondage—‘निबन्धायासुरी मता ।’ Not only this, referring to

the evil conduct of the men of demoniac disposition, the Lord said—"These haters, pitiless, and vilest among men, I hurl frequently into the wombs of birds and beasts in this world, and O Arjuna, these fools falling into such wombs in every birth, and not reaching Me, go further down, i. e., sink into the lowest hell."*

It becomes clear from this that all virtues, elevating sentiments and good conduct are worthy of being cultivated and vices, evil sentiments and evil conduct should be rejected. In chapter XIII, verses 7—11, the Lord catalogued these very virtues and vices under the names of Wisdom and Ignorance. The virtues which He named as Wisdom lead to deliverance or upliftment of the soul, and what was reverse to this was ignorance—'अज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा'—they cause the downfall of the soul.

What is virtue, and what is vice, what is approved ethical conduct and what is unethical—all this we can decide only with the help of the scriptures. The scriptures alone are our authority in this matter.

The Lord also mentioned this in the Gītā—

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥

(XVI. 24)

"Therefore, for deciding what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done, the scriptures are your

* तानहं द्विषतः क्रूरान् संसारेषु नराधमान् ।
क्षिपाम्यजस्रमशुभानासुरीष्वेव योनिषु ॥
आसुरीं योनिमापन्ना मूढा जन्मनि जन्मनि ।
मामप्राप्यैव कौन्तेय ततो यान्त्यधमां गतिम् ॥

authority. Knowing this, you should do here what is laid down in the scriptures.”

If the mind gets confused through the study of the various scriptures and the mutually conflicting statements in them and one fails to discover the true intention of the scriptures, then the proper course is to follow the path laid down by an ancient Teacher who appears to us to have properly understood and interpreted the scriptures. The scriptures also enjoin this. The author of the Mahābhārata says—

तर्कोऽप्रतिष्ठः श्रुतयो विभिन्ना
नैको मुनिर्यस्य मतं न भिन्नम्।
धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायां
महाजनो येन गतः स पन्थाः ॥

(Vanaparva 373. 17)

“Arguments have no foundations, they cannot decide anything; the Vedas assert different Truths; there is no Ṛṣi who does not differ from another. The secret of Dharma is concealed in the cave of Wisdom. Therefore, the path is that which was followed by the great, virtuous men of old.”

Their conduct should be made the standard of behaviour, and one should try as far as possible to regulate the activities of life according to them.

In case one doubts the paths laid down by such ancient Mahāpuruṣas, then the proper course for him will be to make a modern living Mahātmā, whose conduct is pure and unexceptionable, in whom he has faith and whom he regards to be a great soul, his life's ideal—accept the discipline of the Mahātmā and carry on practices according to his injunctions. And if he cannot develop faith on

anybody, let him make his own soul, his own wisdom the guide. Retiring to a secluded place, filling the intellect with discrimination and dispassion, holding fast to peace and patience let him disinterestedly and impartially reflect what is his goal of life, what he should do and what he should not do. Thus considering what is good for him and what is evil, let him decide what things in the world are acceptable and what are worthy of rejection, and then resolutely hold to what are acceptable. Whatever path appears to him desirable, let him adopt it with a determined will, and whatever conduct appears to him undesirable, let him try his utmost to renounce it, let him not allow himself even through mistake to indulge in it. If he thus impartially reflects, and if he asks his inner voice, he will unerringly get the answer that practices of Ahimsā, Truth, Brahmacharya and disinterested service of others are the best; and that inner voice will never approve of his being involved in violence, untruth, adultery or any act of evil to others. Even the most confirmed atheist will hear this answer from the voice within. Thus having once determined the goal, let him not do anything which is opposed or antagonistic to this. To proceed towards the goal, which has been determined after careful thought and scrutiny, means uplifting the soul; and instead of proceeding towards it, to take the reverse course means progress towards a downfall. To do an act deliberately which appears to be evil not only in one's own view, but also in the view of others, is as good as committing suicide by hanging oneself, as good as striking the feet with an axe or doing self-inflicted harm. That is why the Lord said—
'नात्मानमवसादयेत्'—one should not deliberately lower oneself.

Our scriptures have pointed out some vices which are committed through the mind, speech and body and have similarly enjoined five penances each for the purification of the mind, speech and body. Seekers after spiritual good should make it a point to renounce those vices and practise those penances. Bodily vices are three—misappropriation of wealth, killing without sanction and adultery.¹ Vices of speech are four—use of harsh words, lying, backbiting, useless and irrelevant talk.² Vices of the mind are three—consideration of ways and means for misappropriation of another's property, cultivation of thoughts for injuring another, identification of self with the body.³

For the eradication of these three forms of vices, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has prescribed in the Gītā three types of penances—bodily, vocal and mental. The Lord described those penances as follows:—

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥

(XVII. 14)

“The worship of gods, Brāhmaṇas, teachers (including parents) and the wise, purity, rectitude, celibacy and harmlessness—these are said to be penances of the body.”

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. अदत्तानामुपादानं | हिंसा | चैवाविधानतः । |
| परदारोपसेवा | च | शारीरं त्रिविधं स्मृतम् ॥ |
| 2. पारुष्यमनृतं | चैव | पैशुन्यं चापि सर्वशः । |
| असम्बद्धप्रलापश्च | वाङ्मयं | स्याच्चतुर्विधम् ॥ |

(Manu. XII. 61)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3. परद्रव्येष्वभिध्यानं | मनसानिष्टचिन्तनम् । |
| वितथाभिनिवेशश्च | त्रिविधं कर्म मानसम् ॥ |

(Manu. XII. 51)

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत्।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते॥

(XVII. 15)

“Unoffensive, truthful, agreeable and beneficial speech, study of the scriptures and practice of Japa of the Divine Name—these are said to be penances of speech.”

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते॥

(XVII. 16)

“Tranquillity of mind, serenity, habit of meditation on God, self-control, purity of heart—these are said to be penances of the mind.”

Every spiritual aspirant should make it a point to practise all the three forms of penances described above with the purest (Sāttvika) motive*.

We shall conclude this article with one other submission. One infallible means of release from the bondage of the world in the form of misery is taking refuge at the feet of the Lord, and renunciation by an intellect cleansed and sharpened by discrimination and dispassion of all forms of misery, grief, fear and worry. If anybody objects to this by saying that misery and happiness have to be gone through and enjoyed according to the dictates of Prārabdha, then the answer is that the function of Prārabdha is to bring about or remove the causes of misery and happiness;

* श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः।

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते॥

(XVII. 17)

“The threefold penance performed by Yogīs with perfect faith, without desire for fruit, is said to be Sāttvika penance.”

when these causes bring us mental agitation, grief, fear or despair, they do so because of our insensibility and ignorance. Prārabdha is not their cause. Death of a child, loss of money through robbery, loss in business, loss of honour and prestige, disease and spread of infamy—incidents like these take place due to Prārabdha; but the dejection of the spirit that we derive from them is caused by our ignorance, and not by Prārabdha. If we refuse to feel miserable in the face of these incidents, the incidents themselves have no power to make us miserable. If the incidents possessed any inherent capacity to make one miserable, they would bring misery even to men of wisdom; but with reference to liberated souls and men of wisdom, the scriptures declare from the housetops that even most adverse incidents fail to produce any misery in them, they live in a plane which is above happiness and misery. In the view of the man of wisdom there remains nothing which is either favourable or unfavourable. With reference to him, the Śruti says ‘तरति शोकमात्मवित्’—‘he who has known the Ātmā has crossed over grief’; ‘हर्षशोकौ जहाति’—‘the man of wisdom renounces both joy and grief’—that is, he transcends both the states. ‘तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः’—‘who sees the one Paramātmā in all, for him there remains no cause for grief and infatuation.’ In the very beginning of His discourse in the Gītā, the Lord says to Arjuna—

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

(II. 11)

“O Arjuna, thou grieveest over those that should not be grieved for, and yet speakest like the learned; wise men do not sorrow over the dead or the living.”

This proves that it is within our power not to subject ourselves to grief. Had it not been so, had it been subject to Prārabdha, grief would have possessed the wise even after the attainment of wisdom, and the Lord would never have advised Arjuna to renounce grief. Birth and death of bodies, their growth, decay and gain or loss of worldly objects—these are the things which are determined by Prārabdha, and the anxiety, fear and grief with reference to them are caused by Ignorance. He who does not grieve when faced with worldly difficulties—does not beat his breast, suffer no harm because of those difficulties. Therefore, surrendering ourselves to the Lord, renouncing all grief, delusion, despair, anxiety and fear, let us establish ourselves unshakably in the Lord.

□□

Dispassion and Quietism

He alone who is possessed of dispassion can claim to speak on dispassion; and his words alone carry weight. For dispassion moves in a personified form in those who are possessed of it. The road or lane through which they pass is flooded with dispassion. Their eyes send forth waves of dispassion in all directions. Feelings of all kinds arouse kindred feelings in others as a rule. The waves of dispassion accordingly wake up and accentuate similar feelings lurking in every mind they enter into. Quietism and meditation are inseparably bound up with dispassion. Quietism follows dispassion and is followed in its turn by meditation. This trio of dispassion, quietism and meditation remind us of Śrī Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa as living in the forest. Śrī Rāma is accompanied by Sītā and Sītā by Śrī Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa can ill-afford to remain without Śrī Rāma and Śrī Rāma knows no peace of mind without Lakṣmaṇa. While walking they keep Sītā between them. Even so where there are dispassion and meditation, a leaning towards quietism is bound to exist.

The mere sight of a man possessed of dispassion can induce dispassion. No wonder, then, if a sign or word from him induces it. The talk given by a man of true dispassion can infuse dispassion even into a public woman. A harlot was filled with dispassion at the mere sight of Śrī Dattātreya. The opponents of the Muslim saint Haridāsa (a disciple of Śrī Caitanya) sent a wily prostitute to lure him. But his ideal conduct impressed her so much that she gave up her unholy trade and took to the recitation of the Divine Name. Lo! She was caught in the trap of him whom she had sought to entrap—a trap which would

redeem one from all bondage. Potency to kindle the fire of dispassion in the most lustful is the sure sign of a man of true dispassion.

We read in Patañjali's "Aphorism on Yoga" 'वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम्' (I. 37), i.e., meditation on God can be induced by contemplating upon those who are full of dispassion. The very thought of men of dispassion like Śrī Śukadeva can easily lead to meditation on God. Words fail to describe the quietism and dispassion possessed by Śrī Śukadeva. Once he happened to pass by a small lake. A number of women were bathing without covering themselves. They took no notice of the young hermit. He was followed in quick succession by his father Śrī Vedavyāsa. They all felt shy at his appearance and coming out of the lake hurriedly put on their clothes and prayed to him in a mood of humble supplication. Vedavyāsa's amazement knew no bounds. His young son Śukadeva had passed that way just a few moments before. The women did not feel the least abashed in the latter's presence, but at the sight of an old man like him they quickly covered their bodies. Failing to account for this strange behaviour on their part, he asked the ladies themselves to explain their conduct. The ladies were prompt in their answer. "Holy sire!" they said, "your son Śukadeva has lost all sense of differentiation and cannot distinguish between a male and a female, a tree, a bird and a beast. He could not make out whether the figures standing before him were women or trees. The distinction, however, does exist in your mind yet. That is why we felt shy in your presence and put on our clothes." This episode gives an indication of Śrī Śukadeva's quietism.

The story of Jaḍabharata is told in Śrīmad Bhāgavata. He too, was under the spell of dispassion; he was so completely under its sway that he always looked like a sot. It must be remembered here that the intoxication produced by wine is Tāmasika (producing inertia) in character, that caused by food is Rājasika (inducing activity) while that produced by dispassion is Sāttvika (inducing harmony and peace). Jaḍabharata always remained overdosed with dispassion and quietism. But his divine intoxication was something beyond the comprehension of ordinary men of the world. How can one appraise a thing he has neither known nor experienced? That is why he was taken to be an idiot both by his own men as well as by others. Once some robbers forcibly took him away to offer him as a sacrifice at the altar of Goddess Bhadrakālī. Directly one of the robbers drew his sword to lop off his head, the goddess appeared in person and started despatching the sacrificers. The goddess offered to grant a boon of his choice to Jaḍabharata. Pressed by the goddess Jaḍabharata simply asked to restore the victims of Her fury to life. What unique selflessness! What a tender heart even for those who made an attempt on his life!

Once Jaḍabharata was requisitioned to replace one of the four bearers of the palanquin of King Rahūgaṇa. Lest no living creature be trampled under his feet he was walking with wary steps. Consequently he could not keep pace with the other carriers and the palanquin began to lean this way and that way. The king got extremely annoyed. Greatly enraged with Jaḍabharata he severely reproached him and even threatened to kill him. In course of his reproach he also referred to their high and low position. Then came

Jadabharata's answer: "O King! It is difficult to determine the relative position of things in the world. The palanquin is above me, Your Highness is on the palanquin, its roof is above you and above it there is the sky. And whom are you going to kill? The soul is immortal, only the body perishes." Hearing these deeply significant words, the king leapt out of the palanquin. He now came to know that the man whom he had treated as an ordinary being was a saint, and fell prostrate at his feet. Kind-hearted Jadabharata gave him a discourse. Dispassion is the royal road to meditation. Yogīs practising meditation take recourse to dispassion and devices of meditation flash on their mind one after another of their own accord.

Dispassion means absence of attachment towards worldly objects. Dispassion is said to exist in him who has not only no attachment or love for worldly objects of enjoyment but also entertains a strong aversion for celestial enjoyments as well. Quietism, on the other hand, means complete indifference to or absence of interest in all these objects. Quietism accompanied by dispassion is an ideal deceptive. Quietism without dispassion is immature and deceptive. Bhagavān Ṛṣabhadeva possessed a highly developed form of quietism, even greater than that possessed by Bhagavān Buddha. It has no parallel in known history. Though living and moving in the world, he had no consciousness of it. The forest was afire, but he had no knowledge of it. His body too, was enveloped by the fire and reduced to ashes. Yet there was no consciousness of fire or of the pain caused thereby. This is the highest form of quietism. He lived in such a height of divine rapture that he had no consciousness of the world around him. He had no identification with the body.

Whether found in an anchorite or a householder, quietism of this sort is highly praiseworthy.

Quietism is of two kinds—internal and external. Both are commendable; but for the real uplift of the soul, the former is more important. King Janaka did not possess the external form of quietism. In reality, however, the world had no existence for him. Śrī Śukadeva possessed both internal and external quietism. King Janaka pointed this out to him. Approached by him Janaka said to him, “O worthy sage! You possess both internal and external quietism. Hence you are superior to me. You have nothing more to learn. Go and practise meditation.”

Śrī Śukadeva took leave of him and meditated. He entered into the state of Samādhi (absorption) and realized the truth about God.

In spite of the rivers constantly pouring their waters from all sides into the ocean it remains within bounds, full and undisturbed. Even so illumined saints, men of dispassion and desireless souls always remain full in their glory. The various enjoyments of the world cannot upset them (Gītā II. 70). Worldly enjoyments do come to them. And they make proper use of them, indulge in them; yet the enjoyments fail to agitate them. On the other hand, they attain mental peace through them.

The world is absolutely non-existent in the eyes of an illumined saint, while God has no existence in the eyes of worldly-minded men. A sensually-minded man of the world is at least sceptical about God’s existence; an atheist, however, categorically denies the existence of God.

The state of a God-realized soul has been described in verses 68 to 71 of Chapter II of the Gītā. He who attains this state never falls a prey to delusion again. Attaining

this state even at the last moment one is able to enjoy the Bliss of oneness with God:—

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।
स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति ॥

(Gītā II. 72)

“Arjuna, such is the state of the God-realized soul; having reached this state he overcomes delusion. And established in this state even at the last moment, he attains Brahmic Bliss.”

Of the four verses referred to above, the first two, viz., 68 and 69, deal with quietism; while the last two, viz., 70 and 71 speak of dispassion, as will be clear from their translation given below:—

“Therefore, Arjuna, he whose senses are completely restrained from their objects, is said to have a stable mind.” (68)

“That which is night to all beings, in that state (of Divine Knowledge and Supreme Bliss) the God-realized Yogī keeps awake. And that (the ever-changing, transient worldly happiness) in which all beings keep awake is night to the seer.” (69)

“As the water of different rivers enter the ocean, which though full on all sides remains undisturbed, likewise he in whom all enjoyments merge themselves attains peace; not he who hankers after such enjoyments.” (70)

“He who has given up all desires, and moves free from attachment, egoism and thirst for enjoyment, attains peace.” (71)

What has been described above is the actual state of the realized soul, and is the means of realizing the goal to the Sādhaka. The sensual man and the man of dispassion are as unlike each other as night and day. If

one is darkness, the other is light. But it is very difficult to distinguish a man of dispassion from the ordinary run of mankind. We can never judge his greatness from his outward behaviour with the help of our deluded intellect. A dog can never enjoy camphor. How can musk be identified by an ass? Similar is the case with a man of dispassion. He is known to himself alone or at best a rough idea about him can be formed by another man of dispassion. Things which are agreeable and pleasing to a sensual man are like balls of fire to the man of dispassion. They are as hateful to him as vomitted matter.

To a man of dispassion pleasures of the senses appear like poison. Perfumery and other toilet articles, which are so pleasing to a sensually-minded man are loathsome to a man of dispassion. If he ever happens to touch these things even casually, he would feel disgusted as if nightsoil had been sprinkled over his body. His attitude is thus quite the reverse of that of a sensual man. A velvet cushion, which is so agreeable to sensually-minded men, is like a bed of thorns to a man of dispassion. A mat, however, should it ever touch his feet, would appear delightful to his touch. Suppose a number of men retire for repose here. A number of blankets, shawls and pieces of sack-cloth are placed by their side to be used when the night grows cold. Late at night when there is a scramble for these coverings the sensually-minded man would naturally lay his hands on one of the shawls. He may go in for a blanket too, but only when the shawl is not sufficient to keep off the cold. The hands of a man of dispassion, however, will naturally fall on the sack-cloth. These two types of men may not consciously act differently, but they would instinctively resort to such

selective action in spite of themselves. Both have developed a distinctive habit of their own, which instinctively prompts them to act according to their own liking.

The happiness that accrues to a man of dispassion is unknown to the man of the world. The joy of the man of dispassion is purely Sāttvika. A man of dispassion will shun a place where flowers are raining; for these are the things which he loathes from his heart. The gods come to escort him in their heavenly cars, but he does not even care to look at them. He feels uneasy at their sight. He revels in the joy of the Self. What inestimable joy is his, can be judged from the following episode. Indra goes to Dadhīci who is rapt in meditation. On his opening his eyes Indra prays to him for instruction. The sage replies, "O Lord of Paradise! There is no difference between your joys and those of a dog. The pleasures that you enjoy with your wife Śacī in the midst of the untold splendours of heaven are of the same type that a street dog enjoys with his bitch on the dunghill." If we probe this question a bit seriously, the truth of this statement will become evident to us. In fact, sensual enjoyments have no value at all.

Small children put on velvet clothes and fancy caps, and make merry with their playthings. Sometimes they ask their father too, to participate in their game. The father, however, is amused at their invitation, because we elders have a natural aversion for gaudy clothes and toys. They do not appeal to us. Even so men of dispassion feel amused when they are offered objects of sense-enjoyment. They take so much delight in dispassion that they would not exchange it even for nectar. They are thrilled with joy every moment. The state of their mind cannot be comprehended, much less explained. The man of dispassion

alone can understand it. It can be realized only by personal experience. It is impossible to know it by hearing from others. Even as one who has been bitten by a cobra gets convulsions or as waves arise in an ocean or just as a shock runs through the whole body at one's touching a live electric wire, so does a man of dispassion experience thrills of joy every moment,—thrills which are inexpressibly sweet and agreeable. These thrills have no parallel; hence they cannot be described by means of analogy. The illustration of a lustful man will not do; for he knows no peace or real joy. A greedy person will feel thrills of joy if he stumbles on a philosopher's stone; but his joy will be mixed with fear, fear for the loss of his find. He will always be afraid of his own destruction as well of the loss of the philosopher's stone. Therefore, his example too, fails to represent the state of mind of a man of dispassion. It is inexpressible like the experiences of a speechless man. He who knows it cannot describe it and he who describes it does not really know it.

To a man of dispassion worldly enjoyments are as disagreeable as they are pleasing to a sensually-minded man. The man of dispassion is so intoxicated with other-worldliness that he takes no notice of worldly enjoyments. He finds no relish in them. The charm of quietism is even greater than that of dispassion. And the joy derived from meditation is still greater (Gītā V. 21). It is impossible to describe it. All our happiness and enjoyment is but a reflection of a single drop of that ocean of Bliss which has fallen to the lot of that blessed being. Our small understanding is unable to fathom its depths. We can experience it only when by the Grace of God we are able to realize it.

Amṛta-Dhārā

‘Amṛta’ in Sanskrit means immortality or the negation of death. Death constitutes the greatest fear for the embodied being. As for the soul or the spirit, it is immortal by its very nature. It neither suffers the pangs of birth nor the agonies of death. The Gītā says:—

“The soul is never born nor dies; nor does it become only after being born. For it is unborn, eternal, everlasting and ancient; even though the body is slain, the soul is not.”*

But being under the clutches of ignorance that has existed from time without beginning, the soul has forgotten its true nature and identified itself with the physical body—the conglomeration of the five elements—which being a creation of Matter (Prakṛti) is subject to transformation and destruction. It is therefore that though according to the aforesaid dictum of the Lord the soul does not perish with the destruction of the body, it has erroneously come to regard the destruction of the body as its own annihilation, and treats the comforts and afflictions of the body as its own. It indulges in prohibited actions—sinful deeds—of various kinds in order to pamper the body and reaps their bitter fruit in the shape of repeated births and deaths.

Fear of death preys upon every living being without exception; from the highest celestial down to the meanest worm and from the tiniest ant to the biggest elephant all are equally haunted by it. Although in the scriptures the

* न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

celestials are represented as immortals and even in Sanskrit lexicons the word 'Amara' (immortal) has been given as an equivalent of gods (vide Amarakośa: अमरा निर्जरा देवाः), yet in reality they are not immortal. Their immortality is only relative—they are certainly more long-lived than we earthly beings are. Their span of life is hundreds of times longer than ours; their day and night taken together are of the same duration as our year, their day being equivalent to our six months and their night too, occupying the same period. The period of six months from the winter solstice to the summer solstice constitutes their day-time and the other half-year intervening the summer solstice and the winter solstice represents their night-time. The span of life of a celestial extends to full one hundred years according to the measure of time obtaining in the celestial regions. Thus it comes to a little more than 36,000 human years. In our eyes, therefore, the celestials are as good as immortal; for in course of their single life thousands of human generations pass into oblivion. As in the eyes of a moth or a mosquito we human beings too, are as good as immortals inasmuch as myriads of its breeds must be extinct in the course of one human generation, even so when compared to us human beings and other earthly beings, which are even more shortlived than we, it is but reasonable to call the celestials as immortals. It is from this point of view that our scriptures speak of the gods as immortals or deathless beings (अमर or अमर्त्य) and of human beings and other earthly beings as mortals (मर्त्य or मरणधर्मा), and of the earth as the mortal plane (मर्त्यलोक). As a matter of fact, however, the gods are as good mortals as we; fall from heaven constitutes their death. The Gītā proclaims this truth in the following words:—

“Having enjoyed the extensive heaven-world, they return to this world of mortals on the stock of their merits being exhausted.”¹

The same thing holds good in the case of the celestial drink known by the name of ‘Amṛta’. Of this ‘Amṛta’ it is stated in the scriptures that a potion of it makes one immortal. There is a story in the Purāṇas in which we are told that at the beginning of creation the gods as well as the demons jointly churned the ocean under instructions from the Lord with a view of procuring ‘Amṛta,’ and the jar of nectar which came out of the ocean as a result of the churning was taken away by the demons. The Lord, who knew that the demons did not deserve the celestial drink—for their immortality would have proved a curse for the universe—forthwith assumed the form of a charming belle and cheating them of the nectar gave it to the gods who drank it and became immortal. The scriptures also glorify a drink of the sap of the Soma plant during sacrifices. Śruti says: “We drank the sap of the Soma plant and became immortal.”² The Gītā too, speaks of the attainment of Indra’s paradise through a potation of this sap (vide IX. 20). But in all these contexts it should be remembered that the immortality which is stated to be attained through a potation of ‘Amṛta’ or the sap of the Soma plant is only relative in character. Real immortality or getting emancipated forever from the unrelenting shackles of birth and death is something quite different; and even so the potion which induces such immortality is quite distinct from the drink of nectar referred to above; this is what we propose to make out in the following lines. The

1. ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति। (IX. 21)

2. अपाम सोमममृता अभूम।

attainment of this true immortality should be the supreme and ultimate goal of human existence: that is why the scriptures speak of it as the highest good (निःश्रेयस). It is for the attainment of this summum bonum that we have been blessed with the human body; for in the human body alone and in no other birth can we attain to this supreme end. It is for this reason alone that the scriptures declare the human vehicle as difficult of attainment even by the gods. If the immortality attained by the gods were real immortality, it would be quite out of place to call the human birth as superior to birth in heaven; for such immortality is already enjoyed by the gods by virtue of their very birth.

Now we have to find out what is that 'Amṛta' like, a potion of which makes one immortal forever—places one higher than the celestials—in other words, having drunk which one has no longer to suck the mother's breasts, nor to undergo the painful experience of being crammed into the mother's womb, secures immunity from the tortures of hell once for all and is armed against death forever. Needless to say that final liberation of the soul or God-realization is the true immortality which has been spoken so highly of in the scriptures. The Vedas too, aim at the attainment of this immortality. "It is I, the Supreme Being, whom the four Vedas seek to know,"* says the Gītā (vide XV. 15). Of the four objects of human endeavour (पुरुषार्थ) this is the highest, the real object. Man's efforts should be wholly directed towards the realization of this supreme end; in this alone lies the fulfilment of his birth and existence. His parents are really blessed, who attains

* वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यः ।

this immortality during his very life-time. Of him the scripture says— “His race is indeed hallowed, his mother has her life fulfilled and the earth is meritorious by his presence.” * He who having been blessed with the human body remains deprived of this priceless treasure, the sole monopoly of human birth is worse than a brute. The scriptures condemn him by branding him as ungrateful and a killer of his self. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa also deplors the fate of such persons in the following words:—

“The man who having obtained such a God-given opportunity, fails to cross the ocean of worldly existence is indeed ungrateful and dull-witted and suffers the doom of a self-killer.”

The scriptures prescribe numerous ways and means for the attainment of this immortality. Being conducive to the attainment of immortality they are all ‘Amṛta’ or nectar themselves. Just as in Āyurveda (the Hindu medical science) clarified butter is called life itself on account of its life-prolonging properties (आयुर्वै घृतम्), even so according to what is known as Lakṣaṇā Vṛtti (extended acceptance of a word) all the means to the attainment of immortality are also termed as ‘Amṛta’. A potion of anyone of the Amṛtas can make a man immortal in the real sense of the term—there is not the least doubt about it. All noble virtues such as renunciation, even-mindedness and truthfulness etc., are nectar itself. All the scriptures are unanimous in singing the glory of renunciation. The Śrutis unequivocally declare renunciation to be the means of achieving immortality. The Kaivalya Upaniṣad says:—

“Immortality is impossible to achieve through interested

* कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन।

action, progeny or riches; the seekers after it have attained it only through Renunciation.”¹

The Īsopaniṣad also says: ‘Redeem thyself by renunciation alone.’² This statement too makes it clear that our salvation or redemption lies in renunciation alone. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa as well reckons renunciation as a divine virtue (vide Gītā XVI. 2) and declares divine virtues as conducive to liberation (Ibid., XVI. 5).³ Nay, the Lord further says that peace immediately follows from renunciation (Ibid., XII. 12).⁴

Evenness of temper has been glorified by the Lord at several places. He who remains equipoised in the midst of joys and sorrows has been declared in the Gītā as eligible for immortality (II. 15). Equipoise of mind is a distinguishing mark of God-realization and is equally needed in all the three paths of Action, Knowledge and Devotion. Wherever the Gītā speaks of God-realized souls, no matter by which path they have reached the goal, mention is invariably made of even-mindedness. (Ibid., VI. 8,9,32; XII. 18-19; XIV. 24-25). Equipoise of mind has been directly mentioned as one of the marks of enlightenment enumerated in the thirteenth chapter of the Gītā. In the discussion on Karmayoga the term ‘Yoga’ has been defined as equability of mind⁵ and the Sādhaka traversing the path of disinterested action has been called

1. न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः। (I.3)

2. तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः।

3. दैवी संपद्धिमोक्षाय।

4. त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्।

5. समत्वं योग उच्यते।

upon to remain balanced in success and failure (Ibid., II. 48).¹ Nay, harmony has been declared to be the same as the Absolute (Gītā V. 19);² and the man whose mind is established in harmony has been pronounced as liberated in this very life (Ibid., V. 19);³ In this way equanimity too is 'Amṛta' itself.

Even so truth is also 'Amṛta'. Truth is no other than the Absolute (Taittirīya Upaniṣad II.1).⁴ It has been recognized as a divine virtue in the Gītā, and even so the other scriptures are replete with its praises. Śruti declares truthfulness to be a means of Self-realization (*Mund. Up.* III. i. 5)⁵ and the Lord recognizes truthfulness as a form of austerity (Gītā XVII. 15)

Meditation upon God either with or without form is also 'Amṛta'. The joy that is derived from meditation has been declared by the Lord as distasteful like poison in the beginning but sweet as nectar in the end (Ibid., XVIII. 37).⁶ Nay, the Lord recognizes meditation as a direct means to God-realization (Ibid., XIII. 24),⁷ and declares the man who applies himself whole-heartedly to the Yoga of meditation as qualified for attaining oneness with the Absolute (Ibid. XVII, 52-53).

Observance of Brahmacharya or abstinence from sexual indulgence is also 'Amṛta'. The Śruti says: "Through Brahmacharya and austere penance the gods have been able to overcome Death." Nay, the vow of continence is termed as Brahmacharya only because of its being conducive to the attainment of Brahma. "Seeking which (Brahma) the

1- सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा। 2-निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म। 3-इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः। 4-सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म। 5-सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा। 6-यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम्। 7-ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना।

men of self-control observe the vow of celibacy,” says the Kaṭhopanīṣad.¹ The Gītā too, reproduces these words just as they occur in the Kaṭhopanīṣad (vide VIII. 11).

Desirelessness or disinterestedness is also ‘Amṛta’. Śruti proclaims:—‘When the desires that exist in the mind of a man are all got rid of, this mortal then becomes immortal, and realizes God in this very life.’²

The Gītā too, declares disinterestedness to be a means to the attainment of the blissful state—the state of immortality. So says the Gītā:—

“For wise men endowed with equanimity, renouncing the fruit of actions and freed from the shackles of birth, attain the blissful supreme state”³ (II. 51).

The Lord further says:—

“Arjuna, when one thoroughly abandons all the cravings of the mind and is satisfied in the self through (the joy of) the self, then he is called stable of mind”⁴ (Ibid., II. 55).

That the man of stable mind forthwith realizes God is clearly mentioned in the closing verse (verse 72) of Chapter II of the Gītā.

That desire entails bondage and the renunciation of desires ensures supreme and lasting peace in the shape of God-realization has been stated in unambiguous terms in Chapter V of the Gītā as well. The Lord says:—

“Offering the fruit of actions to God, the Karmayogī

1-यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति । 2-यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि स्थिताः । अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ (Kātha. Up. II. iii. 14)

3-कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः । जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥

4-प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वान् पार्थ मनोगतान् । आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

attains peace in the shape of God-realization; whereas he who works with a selfish motive, being attached to the fruit of actions through desire, gets tied down”¹ (V. 12).

Control over mind and the senses is also Amṛta. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

“Others sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the functions of the vital airs into the fire of Yoga in the shape of self-control, kindled by wisdom”² (IV. 27).

It is control over the senses and mind that is referred to above as sacrificing the functions of senses into the fire of Yoga in the shape of Self-control. And it is those who partake of nectar in the form of purity of heart and placidity resulting from such a sacrifice that are said to attain the Eternal Brahma (Gītā IV. 31).

Knowledge of the Supreme Spirit or God is doubtless Amṛta. Śruti proclaims: “Having known Him one crosses the region of death—becomes immortal.”³ The Gītā too, corroborates this truth when it says that having known the Supreme Spirit one partakes of nectar in the form of Supreme Bliss—यज्ज्ञात्वामृतमश्नुते (XIII. 12). This refers to knowledge of God as a means to God-realization. As regards Knowledge (wisdom) which is sought to be attained as an end, it is no other than the Supreme Spirit. “Brahma is infinite; it is Truth and Knowledge Absolute,” says the Taittirīya Upaniṣad.⁴ The Gītā too, declares that God is knowledge itself as well as the object of knowledge, and is also attainable through knowledge⁵ (XIII. 17).

1. युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम्। अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते॥

2. सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे। आत्मसंयमयोगान्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते॥

3. तमेव विदित्वाति मृत्युमेति। (Śvetāśvataropaniṣad III. 8)

4. सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म।

5. ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यम्।

Bhakti too, being conducive to the knowledge of Truth, is Amṛta. The Lord declares in the Gītā that he who constantly worships Him through the Yoga of exclusive devotion transcends the three Guṇas and becomes eligible for attaining Brahma¹ (XIV. 26).

Elsewhere too, the Lord says:—

“With their mind fixed on Me, with their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, they ever remain contented and take delight in Me.”

“On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they attain Me”² (Gītā X. 9-10).

Nay, the knowledge and perception of, and absorption in, God with form and attributes is possible only through exclusive devotion (Vide Gītā XI. 54).

Dispassion too, is Amṛta. Freedom from passion, attachment or affection constitutes dispassion. Dispassion has been declared by the Lord as a distinguishing mark of a stable mind and it has been already pointed out that the man of stable mind instantly attains God. The Lord says:—

“He who is unattached to everything, and meeting with good and evil neither rejoices nor recoils, his mind is stable”³ (Gītā II. 57).

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1. मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान् समतीत्यैतान् ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥
2. मच्चित्ता मदगतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥
3. यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

The Lord further declares that he who acts without attachment attains God¹ (Gītā. III. 19).

Quietism is the fruit of dispassion. Or it is only another name for the highest form of dispassion. It has been described as a mark of a God-realized soul in the Gītā (Vide VI. 20). Thus there can be no doubt whatsoever about its being Amṛta.

Faith in God being a means to the attainment of spiritual wisdom is also Amṛta. The Lord says in the Gītā: "Endowed with faith, one attains Knowledge"² (Vide IV. 39). Similarly fearlessness, purity of mind, charity, performance of sacrifices, study of the sacred texts and repetition of the Divine Name, austerity, guilelessness, non-violence, absence of anger, compassion, gentleness, modesty, spiritual glow, forgiveness, fortitude, purity—both external and internal, absence of malice, pridelessness and all such divine traits—all good qualities and moral virtues—are worth cultivating and nectar-like; while, on the other hand, all bad qualities and moral depravities are worth shunning like poison. Even sense-enjoyments are poison-like. It is therefore that the scriptures enjoin us to give them up—'विषयान् विषवत् त्यज'. The Lord too, has characterized sense-enjoyments as partaking of the elements of Rajas and harmful in the end as poison—'परिणामे विषमिव' (Gītā XVIII. 38). Hence they are worth giving up. Public service, visiting holy places, observing fasts and undertaking other holy vows etc., being forms of austerity, are nectar-like.

The name of God too, is Amṛta. The scriptures

1. असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ।

2. श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानम् ।

proclaim that mere utterance of the Divine Name brings redemption to the soul. Says the Padmapurāṇa—

“Those men who constantly repeat the bi-syllabled word ‘Hari’ undoubtedly attain liberation by sheer utterance of it.”¹

In the Gītā, sacrifice in the form of muttering the Divine Name has been declared by the Lord as identical with Himself ‘यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि’ (Vide X. 25). The scriptures exhort the tongue (the joint organ of speech and taste) in the following words:—

“O tongue! You know the essence of all flavours. You are ever fond of sweetness. Therefore unceasingly quaff the nectar of the name of Nārāyaṇa.”²

Hearing, revolving in one’s mind and reciting the Lord’s name, stories and virtues and the description of His beauty, and residing in the Lord’s abodes on this earth—all these are Amṛta. The Lord is sweetness, love, bliss and immortality personified. Everything related to Him is divine-spiritual, and hence Amṛta. Love of God is also Amṛta, because Love too, is identical with God. Surrendering oneself to the Divine will and the grace of God as well as of God-realized souls are also Amṛta. The Gītā declares self-surrender to God as the only means of transcending Māyā or illusion (Vide VII. 14). According to the Gītā, even women, the Vaiśyas (members of the trading and agriculturist class), the Śūdras (the labouring

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|-------|--------------------|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. ये | वदन्ति | नरा | नित्यं | हरिरित्यक्षरद्वयम्। |
| | तस्योच्चारणमात्रेण | | विमुक्तास्ते | न संशयः॥ |

(Uttarakhaṇḍa 72. 12)

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|-------|-----------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
| 2. हे | जिह्वे | रससारज्ञे | सर्वदा | मधुरप्रिये। |
| | नारायणाख्यममृतं | पिब | जिह्वे | निरन्तरम्॥ |

and artisan class), and those of sinful birth, such as the outcastes etc., can attain to the highest goal by surrendering themselves to the will of God, much more so members of the higher castes (Vide IX. 32-33). Nay the Lord has repeatedly sung the glory of surrendering oneself to Him and has declared it as the surest means of realizing Himself, of attaining supreme peace and the eternal state and of securing absolution from all sins (Vide Gītā IX. 34; XVIII. 62, 66).

In the Mahābhārata, the high-souled Bhīṣma too has declared the act of surrendering oneself to God as the means of attaining the Eternal Brahma. Bhīṣma says:—

“The man who completely resigns himself to the will of Bhagavān Vāsudeva and depends solely on Him gets absolved from all sins and attains the Eternal Brahma.”¹

In the Yoga-Sūtras too, placing oneself at the mercy of God (ईश्वरप्रणिधान) has been recognized as a means to the attainment of Yoga or the accomplishment of Samādhi.

Water which has washed the feet of the Lord, basil-leaves offered at His feet, the water of the Ganges, which has directly washed His blessed feet, and food offered to Him are all Amṛta. The scriptures have sung loudly in praise of water used for washing His feet. The Padmapurāṇa says:—

“A sip of water that has washed the feet of Bhagavān Viṣṇu washes off the sins incurred during millions of births.”²

1. वासुदेवाश्रयो	मर्त्यो	वासुदेवपरायणः ।
सर्वपापविशुद्धात्मा	याति	ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥

(Anuśāsana-Parva)

2. विष्णोः	पादोदकं	पीतं	कोटिजन्माघनाशनम् ।
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(Pātāla. 79.33)

That is why such water is popularly known as Caranāmṛta or nectar issuing from the feet of the Lord.

Of Tulasī leaves as well, the Padmapurāṇa has sung in the following strain:—

“A mere look at the Tulasī plant wipes out the whole stock of sins, its touch purifies the body, salutation to it drives away maladies, watering it scares away death, planting it brings access to God and placing it reverently at the feet of the Lord is rewarded by the attainment of liberation. O Tulasī! Salutations to thee!”¹

The Ganges has been thus glorified in the Purāṇas:—

“The Ganges is the holiest of all holy places, the best of all rivers and the bestower of liberation on all living beings, even on the greatest of sinners.”²

“Nay, he who utters the name of the Ganges even from a distance of hundreds of miles is absolved of all sins and reaches the abode of God Viṣṇu.”³

Food offered to the Lord has also been duly praised in the Śāstras. We have the following in the Padmapurāṇa:—

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1. या दृष्टा निखिलाघसङ्घशमनी स्पृष्टा वपुष्पावनी
रोगाणामभिवन्दिता निरसनी सिक्तान्तकत्रासिनी ।
प्रत्यासत्तिविधायिनी भगवतः कृष्णस्य संरोपिता
न्यस्ता तच्चरणे विमुक्तिफलदा तस्यै तुलस्यै नमः ॥

(Pātāla. 79.66)

2. तीर्थानां तु परं तीर्थं नदीनामुत्तमा नदी ।
मोक्षदा सर्वभूतानां महापातकिनामपि ॥

(Padma. Svarga. 43.53)

3. गङ्गा गङ्गेति यो ब्रूयाद् योजनानां शतैरपि ।
मुच्यते सर्वपापेभ्यो विष्णुलोकं स गच्छति ॥

(Ibid., Sṛṣṭi. 60. 78)

“Having partaken of food offered to God Viṣṇu and placing it on the head man verily becomes one with Viṣṇu and succeeds in eliminating grief caused by death. He is surely no other than Śrī Hari, the sole object of adoration and salutation.”¹

The word ‘Prasāda’ in Saṁskṛta bears different meanings. The grace of God as well as of God-realized souls, purity and placidity of heart and food offered to God are all known as ‘Prasāda’. Hence all of them are Amṛta; for they bring about the cessation of all suffering and lead to the attainment of the supreme goal. The virtue of food offered to God has been briefly stated above. The virtue of ‘Prasāda’ in the sense of purity and placidity of heart has been so described in the Gītā:—

“With the attainment of such placidity of mind all his sorrows come to an end.”²

Joy resulting from placidity of mind brought about by meditation on God has also been declared by the Lord as nectar-like in the end (Vide Gītā XVIII. 37).

The attainment of supreme peace and the eternal state through the grace of God has already been referred to above. In the scriptures dealing with Bhakti, the grace of God-realized devotees too has been recognized as the principal agent for obtaining love of God.³ The Lord

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1. विष्णुप्रसादनिर्माल्यं भुक्त्वा धृत्वा च मस्तके ।
 विष्णुरेव भवेन्मर्त्यो यमशोकविनाशनः ॥
 अर्चनीयो नमस्कार्यो हरिरेव न संशयः ॥

(Svarga. 50.18)

2. प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।

(II. 65)

3. मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव ।

(Nārada: Aphorisms on Bhakti, 38)

speaks of the remains of sacrifice too, as Amṛta and it has been stated above that he who partakes of such nectar attains the Eternal Brahma. Here the word 'Yajña' or sacrifice covers all the practices enumerated in verses 24 to 31 of Chapter IV of the Gītā. Therefore sacrificial remains here stand for placidity of mind which follows as a result of those practices; the attainment of Brahma through that peace is quite in the fitness of things. According to the Vedic text "Sacrifice represents Bhagavān Viṣṇu Himself (यज्ञो वै विष्णुः)" if 'Yajña' is interpreted as Viṣṇu, the words 'sacrificial remains' may be taken to denote the 'Prasāda' of God Viṣṇu, the glory of which has already been described above. Or 'Yajña' may be taken to signify the five great sacrifices (पंचमहायज्ञ) or the rite known as 'Balivaiśvadeva' (in which morsels of cooked food are offered to the various deities before meals). 'Sacrificial remains' construed in any of these senses can be called Amṛta and it is but reasonable that one who partakes of such Amṛta should be absolved of all sins and attain the Eternal Brahma. It behoves us, therefore, to quaff anyone or more than one of the Amṛtas enumerated above to one's heart's content and attain lasting immortality.



Desirelessness

Rāmū and Gopāla both hailed from the same village Rāmapura. Both were Kahāras by caste. Gopāla performed menial duties (such as scouring unclean utensils, dusting the floor etc.) in the household of the Reader to the Chief Minister of the King of Icchānagara (the City of Desire). Older in years than Rāmū, Gopāla stood in the relation of a cousin to the latter. Rāmū's father held a position of eminence in the village. Though inferior in birth, Rāmū was exceptionally intelligent and exhibited a natural wealth of noble qualities, Rāmū had specially developed virtues like devotion to God, modesty, contentment and disinterestedness. His appearance too, was attractive like that of a prince. He was loved by all his co-villagers. At the early age of 15, he had imbibed a number of commendable virtues and received a sound education from Pandit Ramākānta, an elderly scholar of same village, who was a man of extraordinary self-control, moral stamina, learning and devotion and who having relinquished the position of a senior teacher in the town used to coach the boys of the village in a selfless spirit.

The village of Rāmapura, Rāmū's home, was situated at a short distance from the capital town of Icchānagara. Having finished his ablution early one morning, Rāmū set out from his village home and reached Icchānagara while the day was just breaking. After a diligent search he reached Gopāla's residence and surprised him by clasping his feet. Gopāla had just quitted his bed. He was taken aback to see Rāmū at his feet and gazed on him in wonderment and joy.

“Brother, you are blessed indeed!” said Rāmū, still holding Gopāla’s feet. “Brother, it is good you have come. Tell me if all is well at home. But why have you clasped my feet? You are a brother to me that way,” rejoined Gopāla in one breath, starting back a little.

“Brother, how am I to extol you?” I can only say that you are blessed,” repeated Rāmū in a voice choked with emotion.

“Brother, I am one of your own family. And as for my vocation, I am a menial attendant of the Reader to the Chief Minister, scouring his unclean utensils. How am I blessed,” inquired Gopāla.

“That is what makes you blessed, brother. You know our Ruler is a saint of a high order; he is exclusively devoted to the Lord, an enlightened soul and a Yogī,” rejoined Rāmū still clinging to Gopāla’s feet.

“But what of that? It is the Mahārāja who is endowed with the above-mentioned qualities.” protested Gopāla, disengaging his foot. “I claim no such virtues.”

In words full of esteem and love Rāmū said, “Brother, it is no mean privilege to obtain the service of the Reader to the Chief Minister of such a saintly monarch. I should deem my life fulfilled if I were to secure such a job. Nay, my life can be blessed even if I get an opportunity to serve you.” So saying, Rāmū looked straight into Gopāla’s eyes.

Rāmū’s words made a great impression on Gopāla. He said, “Brother, my master was already in need of a servant. He spoke to me about it. You are here and seek his service. Hence I shall get work for you this very day.”

Rāmū started his job at the Reader’s in right earnest.

At the expiry of one month when he did not accept his wages sent through Gopāla, the Reader summoned him and said. "You work day and night with exemplary zeal, reverence, love and devotion. The output of your work is also twice that of the former servant. Hardly any servant would do so much work. Nevertheless you did not accept your emoluments for the last month. I feel much ashamed at this. I think Rs. 10/- per month is too little for you. I am now ready to fix whatever amount you suggest."

Rāmū's joy knew no bounds. He had obtained the privilege of close association with the Reader to the Chief Minister of a monarch who was spotless in character, Sāttvika by nature and endowed with divine virtues. And it was therefore that he was serving his master in a selfless spirit with a heart full of extreme reverence and devotion, and relinquishing attachment and the feeling of 'I' and 'mine'. His master was immensely pleased with him. Hearing the words of his master, Rāmū replied with great humility: "I declined to accept my wages not because they were inadequate."

The Reader was amazed. He did not readily believe Rāmū's words. "Then why do you put forth such untiring exertion?"

"You know well our King is a saint of a high order. He is an adept in Yoga, a man of spiritual enlightenment, a devotee of God and a really exalted soul. You are a Reader to his Dewan. It is my good luck that I have obtained an opportunity of serving you. What more return can I expect for my services?" replied Rāmū with his head bent low.

"A tamarind tree in a mango grove yields only tamarind fruit and no mangoes. Even so our king is just

what you represent him to be; but I for my part am an ordinary human being. I claim none of those virtues which he possesses. What will you gain through my service?" inquired the Reader with curiosity.

"In any case you are a Reader to his own Dewan. I possess no virtue entitling me to the service of men like yourself. To say nothing of the direct service of God, it is a unique privilege to obtain the service even of the servants of servants of devotees depending on Him. For through their contact it is possible to meet some day exalted souls possessing God-love. Even so through your service I hope to be able one day to see the Dewan, who lives in closest contact with that devotee king," Rāmū naively disclosed his mind to the Peshkar.

"A sight of the Dewan is not very difficult to obtain. I can arrange it for you even tomorrow." The Reader was enamoured of Rāmū's reverent spirit. He said, "The Dewan attends his court at 8.30 A.M., while I am there at 8 A.M. You bring a glass of tea and water at 9 A.M.....As for your wages, please let me know what amount I should send to your home."

"I have no need of money. The needs of my household are met in the ordinary course. The very sight of the Dewan will fulfil all my wants." Rāmū politely and respectfully declined the offer of money.

The Reader kept looking at Rāmū. He silently admired the latter's disinterested spirit.

Squatting on a cushion with his back leaning against a big round pillow, the Dewan glanced at the door. Holding a tumbler in his hand, a handsome young stranger was gazing intently at him with enraptured eyes, as if

looking at God Himself. The Dewan looked at him more than once, the youth did not wink his eyes even once. He continued to gaze at the Dewan with hungry eyes.

“Who is that youngman and what does he want?” inquired the Dewan.

“He is my servant, Sir. He has brought tea for me as I could not take it before I came here,” replied the Peshkar.

“Then have your tea first,” said the Dewan.

The Peshkar quickly finished his tea and resumed his work with the Dewan. But the enraptured and endearing look of Rāmū had caught his imagination. The Dewan stole a glance at him at short intervals in spite of himself. Rāmū scoured and washed the tea set and swept the verandah and then set about dusting the shoes of the Dewan lying outside. At the same time he occasionally cast a reverent and loving glance at the Dewan.

“This boy works with singular devotion and zeal without being asked, and that too, with great dispatch and tidiness. What do you pay him?” the Dewan inquired of the Peshkar.

“He does a good deal of work with great efficiency. But he takes nothing in return.”

Seized with wonder, the Dewan forthwith called Rāmū near him and directly asked him, “You work gratuitously with great devotion, can you account for this?”

“I do this only in order to be able to see you, my lord. I feel blessed today,” Rāmū gave out in a suppressed tone.

“What rare virtue do you find in me?” the Dewan inquired of Rāmū, attracted by his outspoken reply.

“Sir, you know our Mahārāja is an exalted soul of a very high order. He is a Yogī, an enlightened soul, a devotee and a saint. You are the Dewan of such a pious Ruler. Is it an ordinary gain to have a look at a man of your position? The sight of such souls is given only to those who are exceptionally lucky,” replied Rāmū in a tone of great endearment and humility.

“When such is your idea, you can as well stay with me.” Rāmū’s devotion had cast its spell on the Dewan.

Rāmū was wonder-struck. Filled with great joy he said, “I shall deem myself supremely blessed in obtaining the nearness of your feet.”

“Well, I should like to keep this chap with me,” said the Dewan turning towards the Peshkar.

“You may gladly do so,” replied the Peshkar.

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“You have been in my service for a long time and the devotion and zeal with which you have served me is something rare in ordinary servants; but the fact that you have taken no remuneration from me so far makes me very uneasy. You may not take regular wages, but you must accept something by way of reward. Allow me to send to your house any amount you suggest from two to four hundred,” said the Dewan with great affection.

“My people at home are able to make their two ends meet, my lord; I require no money,” replied Rāmū like a faithful devotee.

“If you do not see your way to send money, send any other object. I feel greatly beholden to you for your services. I am anxious to make some return for them,” insisted the Dewan.

“Pray do not put me to shame by such remarks. Your service itself is a great obligation on me, since you are the Dewan of an exalted soul and the first servant of a State. Your sight too, was a rare boon for me. You have placed me under a lasting debt by conferring on me the privilege of your service. By continuing in your service I hope one day to obtain through your grace the rare privilege of seeing His Highness.” Rāmū disclosed his mind to the Dewan.

“The sight of His Highness is not at all difficult. I can arrange it for you even tomorrow. I attend the royal court at 12 noon and His Highness arrives there at 1 P.M. Tomorrow being a Tuesday, it is a day of partial fasting for me. You know I attend the court without breaking my fast that day and I get my fruit diet at the court. You take my breakfast there at 2 P.M. But please do send some money to your home, insisted the Dewan.

“I am under a lasting obligation to you, my lord. I need no money.” Rāmū’s head bent low in reverence.

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Rāmū, who was plunged in an ocean of joy at the very sight of His Highness, could not escape his notice. His Highness, perceived a unique delight in his expression. He was gazing on His Highness with unwinking eyes and was beaming with joy. His Highness had fully realized this. He inquired of the Dewan, “Who is that fellow and what does he want?”

“He is my servant, Your Highness. Today being a Tuesday, he has brought fruits for my breakfast,” replied the Dewan.

“All right, first have your breakfast,” commanded the Prince.

The Dewan had his breakfast in a side room and then returned to his duty; while Rāmū cleaned the utensils first and then set about dusting the shoes of His Highness and the Dewan. While doing so he was gazing all the time on His Highness and was being overwhelmed with excessive joy. He was spell-bound as it were. His Highness too, noticed this.

“This boy looks exceptionally smart. What do you pay him?” His Highness inquired of the Dewan. “He serves me with unique earnestness, devotion and zeal, Your Highness; but he accepts no remuneration from me even on being pressed,” replied the Dewan.

His Highness was greatly astonished. He called Rāmū in his presence and said, “You work with such devotion and zeal without any return, how is it?”

“It is no unrequited service, Your Highness. It is through his grace that I have the object of my life fulfilled today by the sight of an exceptionally exalted soul like Your Highness. It is my rare good fortune to have been able to see you.” Rāmū was visibly moved.

“What is it that makes you think so?”

“Your Highness is an exalted soul. The sight of a Yogī, an enlightened soul and a saint like you is a most rare boon and is obtained by exceptional good-luck. I am supremely blessed by seeing Your Highness. My birth stands fulfilled today. Through Your Highness’s good grace I have really attained the object of my life.” Rāmū clasped the feet of His Highness.

“If you like, you can remain with me all the twenty-four hours.” Rāmū had made a lasting impression on His Highness.

“This is indeed a fluke for me. What greater boon can I have?” Rāmū’s head rested on His Highness’ feet.

“Let this boy remain with me,” His Highness told the Dewan. He felt a surge of emotion in his heart. The Dewan bowed his head.

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“I am highly pleased with your services; but you neither accept any remuneration nor do you send anything to your home. I am your debtor. Tell me what is there in your mind. I am anxious to fulfil your want, whatever it may be,” said His Highness.

“When Your Highness is pleased with me, an insignificant slave that I am, I have received everything. I have no need for money”, replied Rāmū.

“I acknowledge my indebtedness to you. You must accept something for my satisfaction,” His Highness repeated in an insistent tone.

“Pray don’t put me to shame by such words. To me, as a matter of fact, all material objects appear very trifling in comparison to Your Highness’s service. I want nothing besides your service. Even then if you insist, you must vouchsafe to me whatever I ask”, Rāmū politely submitted.

“Certainly I shall grant whatever you ask of me.” His Highness had made up his mind to part ungrudgingly even with his whole kingdom on his asking.

“I only pray that I may be allowed to remain close to Your Highness’s feet and that Your Highness may not leave me even for a moment.” With a heart moistened by reverence Rāmū laid himself prostrate at His Highness’s feet.

"This is no boon. You are already with me most of the time. Ask something else."

"That is all I seek, my Lord."

"I don't mind. You can gladly stay on with me."

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"How did you follow me to my bed-chamber at night?"

"I have your orders to remain with you all the time, Your Highness!" Rāmū readily replied with joined palms.

"Come in," said His Highness.

"You had no issue. I have brought him for your service as a son," said His Highness to his queen.

"Very well!" The queen looked at Rāmū. The sight of his charming countenance brought tears of affection to her eyes. She was overwhelmed with motherly love. Rāmū looked on Her Highness like a fascinated child.

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"So far he had been acquainting himself with the work of administration. Henceforward he will sign all papers for me and his signature will be recognized as mine." His Highness told the Dewan. He was immensely pleased with Rāmū's services. Rāmū had a sharp intellect and was exclusively devoted to His Highness and had easily imbibed his qualities. Hence within a short time he had acquired great proficiency in administration. Rāmū was educated too.

The Dewan bowed to His Highness's commands. All State documents now bore Rāmū's signature.

A few days later!

"I am issueless. I want to see you installed as Yuvarāja," His Highness told Rāmū. He had begun to love him as a son.

“Pray do not put me to shame, I cannot give up the service of Your Highness’s feet. The pleasures of sovereignty are nothing when compared to such a big gain,” Rāmū replied in the manner of a dutiful son.

His Highness yielded to his protest and helped him carry on the work of administration under his commands.

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“I am your humble servant. All this is due to your goodwill,” Rāmū said, clasping the Dewan’s feet.

“Ah! You are His Highness’s representative. You are the heir to his throne. Please don’t put me to shame.” The bewildered Dewan somehow managed to instal Rāmū on the royal throne. He had been there to attend the Durbar.

“I am your humble servant. I got all this through your grace alone”, said Rāmū holding the feet of the Peshkar, and began to pull him in his direction in order to share the throne with him.

The poor Peshkar had been there on some duty. With great difficulty he managed to instal Rāmū on the throne and occupied his allotted seat.

“Brother, it is through your grace alone that I have won this throne; please come and occupy it.” Getting down from his throne, Rāmū ran towards the old servant of the Peshkar and politely spoke to him.

“I can never occupy a higher seat in the presence of the Dewan and his Peshkar. Pray don’t put me to shame.” Observing thus the Peshkar’s servant squatted on the floor. He had been there on some business. Rāmū was entirely free from egoism.

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“You are humility personified. Egoism and the sense of meum have not even touched you. From the lowest menial to the highest official everyone is immensely pleased with you. You also evidently possess rare administrative capacity and ability. Therefore, in obedience to my call please accept the princely state. I should like to retire now,” His Highness made this suggestion to Rāmū.

“Your Highness has pledged yourself to keep me all the twenty-four hours by your side; how, then, could you keep me away from you even for a second? I have no craving for sovereignty. Pray don’t put me to shame by paying all these compliments; I shall not be able to leave Your Highness even for an instant. I am altogether unable to accept the royal throne and I lovingly crave your forgiveness for this.” Rāmū communicated his decision to His Highness in a polite, loving and yet firm voice.

“Then assume the reins of government jointly with me.” His Highness had to change his mind against his will.

Rāmū now looked after the administration of the State conjointly with the Mahārāja.

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This parable of Rāmū Kahāra is intended to illustrate an important spiritual truth. Rāmū Kahāra should be taken to represent a Sādhaka treading the path of God-realization; while the Peshkar’s servant, Gopāla, should be understood to typify the servant of servant of a devotee of God. The Peshkar himself should be recognized as standing for the servant of a devotee of God; while the Dewan should be held to symbolize a devotee of God

and the Ruler of Icchānagara to stand for God Himself. The devotion, wisdom and proficiency in Yoga attributed to the Ruler should be taken to illustrate the divine attributes. The Mahārānī should be understood to represent the Divine Mother, God's own potency. Rāmū's spurning all offers of return, from monthly wages to the royal state, should be construed as typifying self-denial combined with a spirit of disinterestedness; while his faithful and loving devotion to work should be recognized as symbolizing spiritual striving. Even so his reverent, devout, polite and unegoistic behaviour should be taken to illustrate the ideal conduct of a Sādhaka; the princely state should be taken to represent Mukti (liberation) and living in constant company with the Ruler should be understood as typifying unalloyed love of a high order.

The above parable teaches us that giving up egoism, the sense of meum, attachment and self-interest one should humbly carry out the behest of God with reverence and devotion in a selfless spirit, and renouncing the desire even for liberation should insist on His disinterested and loving service living constantly in His company and remembering Him all the time.

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Worship of Unqualified, Formless Brahma

Really speaking, the worship of unqualified, formless Brahma by itself is never possible. For, the goal of worship has to be fixed on the basis of some distinctive mark or quality. One may form the subtlest of conception for the object of meditation, but unqualified and formless Brahma is infinitely subtler than this. Nevertheless, so long as God is not actually realized, man has to carry on worship, fixing his attention on some goal for the sake of God-realization. That goal may be the subtlest one can conceive, and yet it is nothing but an aspect of his intellect combined with the conscious Soul. That is to say, meditation practised on the goal fixed up with the help of the intellect is nothing but meditation on Brahma mixed up with the intellect and not on Brahma, pure and absolute.

The final fruit of such worship—in other words, the ultimate goal attained by it is unqualified and formless Brahma. This is also called attainment of Mukti or liberation. The Gītā and other scriptures have described it as attainment of the Supreme State, attainment of Perfect Brahma, realization of Eternal Peace, and through various other names.

BEING-PERCEPTION-JOY

In the beginning, the Sādhaka may identify Brahma, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, with every material object of sight. That is to say, he may

proceed with worship, understanding that every object of sight conforms to the three principles of Being, Perception and Joy. All objects have their 'existence'; this is called 'Asti' (Being). They are subject to 'perception'; this is called 'Bhāti' (Perception). And they contribute in some form or other to the 'Joy' of this or the other being; this is called 'Priya'. But a deeper analysis will prove the character of Brahma to be much subtler than this. For the existence of material objects being the object of experience of the senses, mind and intellect is a transient form of existence. The existence of God, the embodiment of Cit, is very much different from this, and is an eternal form of existence. The knowledge consisting of the perception of things, also being the function of the senses, mind and intellect, is a material and transient form of Knowledge. And the joy derived from objects, being similarly the function of the senses, mind and intellect, is mixed up with sorrow, and hence material, transient and mutable in character. God is infinitely superior to, and more transcendent than this. For it that 'Joy' really represented God, it could not be the object of experience of the senses, mind and intellect, nor could it be finite and momentary in character. Nevertheless, regarding the above principles of Being, Perception and Joy as the semblance of God in a remote sense, one may proceed with worship.

Question: Just as in the match, fire is present, but its shining and burning powers are unmanifest; in the moon, besides existence of fire the shining power also is manifest, but the burning power is unmanifest, and in the sun over and above existence, both the shining and

burning powers are manifest; even so, the Existence aspect of God is manifest in all material objects, but Consciousness and Bliss aspects are unmanifest; in men of the ordinary type Existence and Consciousness aspects are manifest, but the Bliss aspect is unmanifest; and in the incarnations of God and great sages, all the three aspects, viz., Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, are directly manifest. Rubbing of the match brings out fire with its shining and burning powers. Even so, the practices of worship and meditation reveal God in material objects as it did in the form of Man-Lion in the broken column for the sake of His devotee, Prahlāda. God thus manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee, when he devotes himself to the practice of devotion. How is this practice to be carried on for the realization of God as the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss?

Answer: Such practice is, no doubt, better than the worship of God in the form of Being, Perception and Joy, as stated above; but still better is the practice of getting established in the Knower to the exclusion of both Knowledge and the object of Knowledge. He who is the Knower is the Seer and the Witness, He is the Supreme Brahma or God, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss—understanding thus, one should get unshakably established in the Knower.

KNOWER, KNOWLEDGE AND OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

All external things which are attempted to be known are the 'Objects of Knowledge'; the method by which the truth about them is reached is called 'Knowledge', and the agent gaining that Knowledge is called the 'Knower'.

As between the 'Object of Knowledge' and 'Knowledge', on the one hand, and 'Knowledge' and the 'Knower', on the other, the latter is vaster, fuller in life, subtler, and more extensive than the former; for, it is the substratum and constant factor. All objects of Knowledge are included in Knowledge, and the latter is included in the Knower; hence Knowledge is superior to and greater than the object of Knowledge, and the Knower is superior to and greater than Knowledge. And, reversely, Knowledge is 'smaller' than the Knower, and the 'Object of Knowledge' is smaller than 'Knowledge'. The Yoga-Darśana of Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

तदा सर्वावरणमलापेतस्य ज्ञानस्यानन्त्याज्ज्ञेयमल्पम् ।

(IV.31)

“On the cessation of affliction and Karma, when dirt in the form of obstruction disappears, the object of Knowledge stands smaller compared to infinite “Knowledge.”

The 'Object of Knowledge' stands objectively to 'Knowledge', and 'Knowledge' stands objectively to the 'Knower'. That is why 'Knowledge' is more imbued with life and subtler than the 'object of Knowledge', and the 'Knower' is more imbued with life and subtler than 'Knowledge'. And, reversely, as between the 'Knower' and 'Knowledge', on the one hand, and 'Knowledge', and 'Object of Knowledge', on the other, the latter is comparatively grosser and more material in character. For, the object of Knowledge is grosser than the Knower, who is fuller in Consciousness and subtler.

When the 'Knower' decides not to know the 'object of Knowledge', he becomes freed from both 'Knowledge' and

the 'object of Knowledge'. That is why both 'Knowledge' and the 'Object of Knowledge' are contained in the 'Knower'. And the content (आधेय) of 'Knowledge' is the 'object of Knowledge' and the container of the 'object to Knowledge' is 'Knowledge', and the container of 'Knowledge' is the 'Knower'; that is the reason why the 'Knower' pervades both 'Knowledge' and the 'object of Knowledge', and 'Knowledge' pervades the 'object of Knowledge'.

Negation of the 'object of Knowledge' leaves as residue 'Knowledge' as an aspect of the intellect; and when 'Knowledge' itself is negated, the 'Knower' alone remains as residue; hence, 'Knowledge' is the basis or substratum of the 'object of Knowledge', and the 'Knower', the embodiment of Truth, is the basis or substratum of 'Knowledge' and existent for a longer duration. There may be total cessation of both 'Knowledge' and the 'object of Knowledge', but never of the 'Knower'. That is why the 'Knower' is 'Eternal' and Truth itself.

The 'Knower' is Bliss; hence he should be worshipped as the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

The organ of speech utters sound only when we desire to speak; when we become silent, it makes no sound. All external objects fall within our sight only when we desire to see; on our closing the eyes, nothing falls within our view. In the same way, when we desire to know, we obtain Knowledge of the 'object of Knowledge'; in case we do not desire to know, no such knowledge can be obtained. Therefore, negating all objects which can be seen, heard of, and known, one should negate even the aspect of the intellect known as Knowledge. After this process of negation, what is left as residue is the 'Knower'; and that

absolute Knower, devoid of even the quality of knowership, is eternal Brahma, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. Knowing this truth, one should try to get established in this absolute, transcendent, eternal form of Knowledge and Bliss.

But better still than the above practice of meditation on the 'Knower', negating both 'Knowledge' and 'the object of Knowledge', is the practice of meditation on God Himself, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

SAT OR EXISTENCE

Sat, or Existence, is that which can under no circumstances be negated. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

(II. 16)

“The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be; the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of Truth.”

Sat, or Existence, has been described in verse 3 of Chapter XII. Therein the Lord says:—

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥

“Those who constantly adore as their very self the unthinkable, all-pervading, imperishable, ineffable, eternal, immobile, unmanifest and immutable Brahma (they too come to Me).”

The practice should be carried on by concentrating on the thought that God is unborn, imperishable, unmanifest, indestructible, all-pervading, everlasting, immobile, immutable, eternal and truth itself.

CIT OR CONSCIOUSNESS

Cit, or Consciousness, is that which is the knower of all, whose light illumines all, and which cannot be known by any other thing. The Lord says:—

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।

(XIII. 17)

“The light of all lights, it is said to be beyond the darkness of Māyā.”

The practice of meditation on Cit lies in concentration on the thought that God is omniscient, embodiment of Knowledge, light of lights, illuminer of all, inconceivable, beyond both darkness and ignorance, the seer, the witness, the knower and Consciousness itself.

ĀNANDA OR BLISS

Ānanda or Bliss is the state of infinite, imperishable, transcendent, unsurpassable, supreme Joy—the state where there is total negation of both distraction and misery.

The Lord says:—

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद् बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥
यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।
यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥

(Gītā VI. 21-22)

“The state in which the soul experiences the eternal and supersensuous Joy which can be apprehended only through subtle and acute reason, and wherein established the Yogī moves not from Truth, and having obtained which he does not reckon any other gain as greater than that, and established in which he is not moved even by great sorrow.”

The practice lies in concentrating on the thought that God is total Bliss, unsurpassable Bliss, quiet Bliss, solid Bliss, unshakable Bliss, stable Bliss, eternal Bliss, Bliss in the form of Knowledge, Bliss in the form of Wisdom, Supreme Bliss, great Bliss, even Bliss, inconceivable Bliss and infinite Bliss.

IDENTITY OF SAT, CIT, ĀNANDA

The marks of Brahma, stated above as Sat, Cit and Ānanda, are not the qualities of Brahma, as distinguished from Brahma. Nor is Brahma the substratum of those qualities; for Brahma is above the qualities. Therefore, those marks are said to be the inherent marks of Brahma, the synonyms of Brahma; for that which is Sat is verily Cit, and that which is Cit is verily Sat; and that which is Sat is verily Ānanda, and that which is Ānanda is verily Sat; and that which is Cit is verily Ānanda, and that which is Ānanda is verily Cit.

Brahma has been described as Sat, because He is ever existent, and can never be negated. This is proved by the experience of saints. Though the entire world, including mind, ceases to exist in the mind of the saint, Brahma, the embodiment of Sat, Cit and Ānanda, remains. He is called Cit or Consciousness, because He does not stand in the relation of object to anything, and even the subtlest traces of matter exist not in Him, and He is the Knower of Himself. And because there is total absence of misery in Him, and He is Supreme Peace and Supreme Joy, He has been described as Ānanda or Bliss.

The Knower of worldly happiness is different from it; this happiness is not conscious of itself, hence it is a material form of happiness. But the Knower of the Bliss

of Brahma is not different from Brahma. That Self-existent Bliss knows itself; in other words, that Bliss is the same as Jñāna or Consciousness. Cit, or Consciousness is not something different from the Bliss. Like worldly happiness, Bliss is not subject to origin and end, growth and decay; that is why it is a state above all modifications. Sat, or Existence, is not a different state from this. The very existence of Bliss is indicative of the principle of Existence. From that Existence of God, Cit or Consciousness also is not something different; that Existence (Sat) itself is Consciousness (Cit), and Consciousness is Existence. Hence Existence is not different from Consciousness. The word Sat has been used in order to indicate the existence of Consciousness, so that none can ever imagine its negation.

‘Consciousness exists’—this statement does not make Consciousness and Existence two different things. In order to indicate the presence of Consciousness the statement is made that ‘Consciousness exists’. Similarly, the statement that ‘Bliss exists’ does not make Bliss and Existence two different things. The statement only indicates the presence of Bliss. Even so, the word ‘Vijñānānanda’ should not make one regard Wisdom and Bliss as two different things; for as in the case of worldly happiness, there is no separate Knower of Bliss. Bliss indicates a kind of joy totally different from worldly happiness, devoid of all taints of Matter, and conscious of itself. In other words, Bliss is the same as Knowledge. Jñāna, or Knowledge, is not anything different from Bliss; that is to say, Knowledge itself is Bliss, and Bliss being neither its attribute nor qualification, it is called ‘Vijñānānanda’.

The conception of God formed in the mind from the above explanation of the terms Sat, Cit and Ānanda, is a conception formed only by the intellect. The Gītā describes it as “supersensuous Joy apprehended only through subtle and acute reason” (VI. 21). The Kaṭhopanīṣad also says:—

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

(I. III. 12)

“The Self hidden in the heart of all beings is not revealed to all. Sages possessed of keen intelligence alone see it with the help of their sharp and acute reason.”

The real form of God is exceptionally different from whatever one may understand to be God’s form with the help of one’s intellect. The real, indescribable form of God is realized only through direct Knowledge of that embodiment of Sat, Cit and Ānanda. It is called also the realization of absolute Brahma, or the realization of Supreme Brahma.

□□

Questions and Answers About Self-upliftment

During Satsaṅga many friends put questions, the answers to which, being of general public interest, are being placed before the reader in the form of the present article.

Question 1:—Verse 5 of Chapter VI of the Gītā states, “One should lift oneself up by one’s own efforts and should not degrade oneself.” What is the significance of this statement?

Answer:—The significance of the verse is that man is free so far as the lifting up or degrading the self is concerned. Development of the virtues and practice of right conduct, following the scriptures, and in a disinterested spirit, practice of devotion to God or adoption of the discipline of knowledge—these are what is meant by lifting oneself up by one’s own effort; and violation of the scriptures, adoption of evil sentiments and evil conduct, denial of God and leading life following the path of error born of ignorance, indolence and addiction to sense-enjoyments—these mean degrading the self by oneself.

Question 2:—An individual lacks faith in the scriptures and does not believe in God, but honours the virtues. What is the test in his case to discover whether he is uplifting or degrading the self?

Answer:—When he does not practise untruth, adultery, violence, theft, gambling, hatred and attachment, etc., which according to his own principle he regards as injurious, and practises with earnestness, truth, continence, non-violence, non-theft, equality, etc., which he regards as good and beneficial, he may be said to be uplifting himself; but if he does not observe restraint in regard to

acts which are bad from his own standpoint, and does not practise acts which he regards as good, he is degrading the self.

Question 3:—When man falls asleep, he practically loses all power of independent action during that period. Can any effort for self-development be made fruitful even during that period?

Answer:—Certainly, even then effort can be made fruitful. It is generally the thought-currents, which come to possess the mind when one falls asleep, that assume form in the dream state; hence immediately on retiring to bed, before actually falling to sleep, the currents of thought should be turned Godward, that is to say, the mind should be filled up then with the thoughts of God's name, form, virtues, glory, truth, secret and sports, etc., or with the ideas of public good. When this is done, good dreams will follow, and in case one falls into deep sleep, he will find on waking the current of same thought, with which he started the sleep, returning to his mind. This is a very easy way of quickly reforming the mind. It requires neither time, nor money, nor any labour, but the gain is inordinate. Hence the time which is wasted during sleep should be attempted to be made fruitful by special effort on the line as stated above.

Question 4:—What should a man, seeking his own development, do during the waking state, when devoting his body and senses to ordinary activities of the world, such as taking of food and recreation, and pursuit of livelihood, etc., so that the time which is uselessly wasted by him may be put to some real use?

Answer :—Remembrance of God, and in every act cultivation of the disinterested spirit (the spirit of self-

sacrifice)—when these two are practised, the time which now appears as being uselessly wasted may be changed into the best possible time.

Question 5:—How can God be realized within the shortest time through the charities and acts of benevolence we perform?

Answer :—The fruit of charity becomes small because of the underlying idea existing naturally in the mind of the giver that the receiver of charity stands on a lower pedestal than himself, and he, being the giver, stands on a higher pedestal; that is to say, he is the benefactor, the giver of gifts. As the fruit of his acts of charity, he obtains in this world riches, honour, greatness, social prestige and various objects of enjoyment, and after death may find access to the abode of the celestials, but all this is nothing but worthless trash. Therefore, the benefactor or the giver of gift should cultivate the idea in his mind that all the objects through which he is rendering service to the people belong to God Himself, and he is giving them according to the promptings of God. He is neither the benefactor, nor the real giver. As an instrument only, he is giving away God's own things for God's service, according to the directions of God. It is God's grace that he has been made an instrument for this work. He who thus remembering God, and giving up pride, gives in a disinterested spirit, his gift is considered to be of the highest type, and it may lead him to the realization of God as speedily as possible.

Question 6 :—Nowadays, in the field of business, people practise deceptions of various sorts to reduce their payments of income-tax and sales-tax, etc., they make false ledgers, trade in the black market and close the lips

of officers of the Government by illegal gratification and take recourse to many other dishonest and unfair means for the commission of theft and deception. Is it possible to reform these people and bring about their spiritual regeneration?

Answer :—Why not? Everything is possible through proper effort. The effort, however, should be guided by understanding. The root of these evils lies in the greed for wealth born of ignorance. People who have no faith in God, the other world or the injurious effect of evil deeds are generally found to be guilty of such crimes. They lack the comprehension that ultimately they will have no connection with this wealth but will have to go through severe punishment and torture for the expiation of their misdeeds. That is why regarding wealth as the be-all and end-all of life, they render it their utmost devotion. But they should seriously consider that the wealth for the earning of which they are committing those various guilty acts, their contact with it will be extremely short, for neither are they going to live long, nor will the wealth continue for long. And the wealth they crave for will bring them no happiness in this world; and about the next world, the less said the better! In the earning, preservation, expenditure and loss of wealth, they will experience so much of misery that there is practically no limit to it. Therefore, giving up the slavery of wealth, they should take recourse to God and depend on Him and worship God through legitimate business pursuits* (Gītā XVIII. 46). And while carrying on

* यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

commercial transactions, he should cultivate the thought that he is doing this not for the sake of wealth, but for the sake of God.

Thus earning wealth through truthful and honest means and regarding it as a duty to render service to God in the form of the universe, treating profit and loss as equal in value, and maintaining constant remembrance of God, the pursuit of trade carried on by one as the behest of God and for the sake of God, may bring him speedy reformation and ultimate deliverance.

That this does not happen, one main reason for it lies in the Government laws as well. The exorbitant scale of the Income-tax and Sales-tax compels people to hide their transactions; and no amount of strictness enables Government to realize their entire dues. But just as when a shop-keeper raises the percentage of profit, there is a drop in his sales; and when he reduces the profit, the sales go up, and thus his income, instead of falling, rises; even so, if the taxes are reduced, people are likely to be tempted less to hide their profits, and thus perhaps the Government would suffer no particular loss, and the people on their part would be saved from the sin of murdering their conscience. Similarly, controls and licenses are on the increase which on their part go to create the black market and uphold bribery, as the result of which the masses are compelled to pay more in order to get all their requirements from the market. It is our humble submission to the Government that they should devote their earnest attention

“He from whom is the emanation of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty, man attains perfection.”

to this matter and remove all controls over the articles of food and clothing imposed after the war and withdraw all restrictions over movements and the policy of taking license for trade. Mahātmā Gāndhījī also opposed the continuity of these restrictions. For they compel traders to take recourse to objectionable methods and offer inducements to Railway and other Government officers to take to bribery and other forms of illegal gratification, and make labourers work the less, which reduces production, and the agriculturists, therefore, conceal their stocks and the spiral of price level goes on rising higher and higher. The malaise has affected the entire world bringing about all round degradation in every sphere of life—social, religious and economic, etc.

Thoughtful men of influence should try to discuss the gravity of the situation with the members of the Central Government, and the Government also should give a hearing to their recommendations and bring about the necessary reforms, so that the people may be rescued from the clutches of misery, high price as well as sin.

Question 7:—The custom of gift to the bridegroom and dowry, etc., connected with marriage is causing much hardship to the people. How can this be stopped?

Answer:—It can be stopped through the observation of the evils to which it gives birth, as well as through the renunciation of hateful greed, which is born of ignorance. The acceptance of gift or dowry from a relative of the bridegroom is also a form of acceptance of charity. Just as an improper charity is worthy of relinquishment, even so an improper gift to the bridegroom is worthy of relinquishment. The giver gives, even though unwilling, with a bruised heart, that is also an additional

reason why such a gift should be given up. Wealth earned without effort leads only to worthlessness and promotes loss of shame involved in the appropriation of another's money. The daughter cannot be given away in marriage unless a respectable dowry is paid, hence the father is compelled to take recourse to sin for the accumulation of wealth. To settle the marriage of a boy after taking a decent amount from the bride's party indirectly means selling the boy. The evil custom is, indeed, the root of various forms of sin. Many people make only a show of valuable gifts, and for this they have to take recourse to deceit. The sight of large gifts and dowry in one case tempts others to imitate the same. The exhibitions made during the process of giving and acceptance tend to encourage the custom, which is also a secret evil. They lead only to the increase of sin and misery. Marriage being impossible without large dowry, propagation of the race tends to decrease. The sight of the misery of their parents induce some girls to commit even suicide; some parents treat their girls as burdens on them, and some turn beggars as the result of the heavy expenses of marriage. Therefore, the custom is most objectionable from every point of view. It has become almost a common practice among all sections of society in all the provinces of India; but in effect it is destructive of wealth, the strength of numbers, fame and religion. Therefore, it is conducive to the welfare of all to stop the evil custom altogether, or retain it only in name.

Question 8:—In connection with marriage and other ceremonies people waste much money over external shows, e.g., illumination, dinner for a large number of guests, fire-works, amusements, sports, theatre, cinema, etc. Such waste of money is daily on the increase even

among those who regard themselves as reformists. What should be done to put a stop to such waste of money?

Answer:—Such useless expenditure of money is really harmful both for the country and society. Wealth, virtue and time all are needlessly wasted through such activities. They lead to the increase of misery and sin. They are extremely harmful to the masses from every point of view. Realizing this through one's better mind, after deep and careful thought, the practices should be firmly stopped for the good of the nation, country and one's own society.

Question 9:—Practices connected with birth, death, marriage and religious ceremonies, which are evil by nature, and harmful to the nation and country, are daily increasing. How are they to be totally stopped?

Answer:—Through firm efforts, surrendering oneself to God, and distinguishing critically between sin and virtue, evil and good, loss and gain, etc.

(a) When a son is born, people invite to their homes large number of friends and indulge with them in playing dice and cards, smoking various intoxicating drugs, eating meat and drinking wine, and give themselves over to jokes, pleasantries, amusements and sports. All these naturally impress badly on the mind of the mother and child. Therefore, they should be given up at all costs, regarding them as extremely harmful. In their place, the birth-ceremony and the ceremony of naming the child, etc., which are mentioned in the scriptures should be observed, following the necessary rules. Kīrtana, Satsaṅga, discourses on the sacred books and recitation of the scriptures should be organized for producing good impression on the mind of the mother and child, and

stories about the lives of devotees and ancient heroes should be read to them for the growth of wisdom, dispassion, devotion and right conduct, so that the ideas of spiritual growth and public good may inspire them to reform themselves, and there may be an increase in them of the wisdom leading to development in this world as well as in the next.

(b) At the time of death, people express their grief through loud weeping and lamentation, and the beating of breast and head, and many people gathering from far and near create much noise and give an exaggerated demonstration of sorrow. This is followed by the Śrāddha ceremony held with much external pomp and show. All this is bad. It leads to nothing but waste of money and time; relatives staying at distant places are put to unnecessary trouble and labour, and the dead soul derives no profit whatsoever. Therefore, the practices should be reformed. With a view to bring peace to the dead soul the members of the family should observe all the scriptural rules regarding cremation, Daśagātra, Nārāyaṇabali, Sapiṇḍī Śrāddha and feeding of Brāhmaṇas etc., and offer prayers to God. For the alleviation of grief, discourses on devotion, knowledge, dispassion and right conduct, and stories from the Itihāsas and Purāṇas should be heard. Family members and other relatives, who are living at distant places, and on whom it is incumbent to pay a visit on an occasion like this, though they may be internally disinclined to do so, should be informed about the incident in such courteous and humble terms that they may easily drop the courtesy visit and avoid the unnecessary trouble and waste of time and money. During the Śrāddha ceremony, expenses on the external showy aspects should

be reduced as far as possible, and money should be spent instead according to one's capacity for the service of the widow, the orphan and other creatures suffering from want and misery.

Those who come to console the bereaved family, it is their duty to cite examples of famous men of virtue in the past and thereby bring solace to the family members observing grief; lives of such great men should be described as may bring knowledge and dispassion to their mind, pointing out the perishable nature of the body, of the world and of worldly enjoyments. Producing the fear of death and the attraction of a good life in the other world, they should be induced to devote themselves to right conduct. Ideas of dispassion, discrimination and devotion should be placed before them, so that their care and grief may be driven away, yielding place to contentment and peace.

(c) In connection with the marriage ceremony, many evil customs are getting current, e.g., play of dice, cards, etc., indulgences in indecent and vulgar jokes, amusements, vulgar songs, gambling, fire-works, slaughter of animals, eating of flesh, smoking of tobacco, cigarettes and other intoxicating drugs, drinking of liquor, visiting clubs and cinema houses, and arranging dinners through hotels, etc. All these are destructive of the religion and culture of the nation and country and injurious to the interest of this world and the next. Therefore, these should be totally stopped, and in their place ceremonies of sacramental marriage, attended with oblations to fire and worship of the gods, should be performed with the help of well-qualified Brāhmaṇas. High ideals, calculated to bring them supreme good, should be instilled into the heart of both the bride and the bridegroom, and books dealing with supreme knowledge, dispassion, the

practice of devotion and right conduct etc., should be presented to them. Discourses and musical soirees, etc., by well-known man of learning, possessed of character, should be arranged, so that social practical, religious and spiritual knowledge may advance.

(d) During the Holī, playing of fire-works, throwing dust, mud and ashes, etc., indulgence in vulgar songs and indecent amusements, and during the worship of the Devī and Goddesses like Kālī and Sarasvatī, and observance of Devālī, etc., evil customs like slaughtering animals, flesh-eating, fire-works, excessive illumination, gambling etc., have become current in society. They bring good neither in this world, nor in the next. On the contrary, they lead to both moral and spiritual fall. Therefore, they should be totally stopped. They should be substituted by the chanting and Kīrtana of God's names and glories, offering of prayers and praises to God, practices of Japa, askesis, study of scriptures, worship of celestials, service of guests, oblations to fire, practice of charity and attendance to Satsaṅga, etc. The demonstrations should be so arranged that they may lead to supreme good, both here and hereafter.

These evil customs and practices are extremely harmful to the nation, to country as a whole as well as to every individual. They bring about moral, religious, and social degradation. They serve neither any worldly interest, nor spiritual interest; on the contrary, they are harmful both here and hereafter, and are likely to bring stigma to one's fair name. When this is properly and adequately realized, the evil customs may cease to exist. It is the duty of every intelligent man to deeply realize their evil effects and give them up himself and induce others to give them up.

The Glory of Equanimity

The scriptures praise the glory of Equanimity both in the Sādhaka and the perfect saint. Equanimity is an indispensable requisite for the practice of all forms of discipline—Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Dhyānayoga and Jñānayoga. Indeed, the test of perfection lies in Equanimity. After God-realization, Equanimity with regard to all objects, acts, thoughts and beings, becomes natural and complete; and in the Sādhaka state, the more there is Equanimity, the nearer one is to God. The more one's mind is uneven, the remoter is he from God. In other words, the less a Sādhaka is subject to passion and prejudice, the nearer is he to God; and the more he is subject to attraction and hatred, the greater is the distance between God and him. The Gītā has specially brought out and established this point. So long as one is under the influence of attraction and repulsion, one can neither be a Yogī, nor a devotee, nor a man of Knowledge. Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jñānayoga attain perfection when there is total absence of hatred and attraction. In order to show the state of perfection of Karmayoga, the Lord, while describing the marks of the Yogī possessed of a stable mind, said—

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु	विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।	
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा	प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥	
प्रसादे	सर्वदुःखानां	हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो	ह्याशु बुद्धिः	पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥

(II. 64-65)

“But the self-controlled Sādhaka, while enjoying the various sense-objects through his senses, which are

disciplined and free from likes and dislikes attains placidity of mind. With the attainment of such placidity of mind, all his sorrows come to an end; and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind, soon withdrawing itself from all sides, becomes firmly established in God."

With reference to Bhaktiyoga also, freedom from desire and hatred has been brought out as an indispensable requisite—

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।
 सर्वभूतानि सम्मोहं सर्गे यान्ति परन्तप ॥
 येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
 ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः ॥

(VII. 27-28)

"Arjuna, O chastiser of foes, in this world through the delusion of pairs of opposites (such as pleasure and pain) born of desire and hatred, all beings are being enveloped in utter ignorance. But those men of virtuous deeds, whose sins have come to an end, being freed from delusion in the shape of pairs of opposites, worship Me with a firm resolve in every way."

And, for the Jñānayogī also the Lord advised eradication of attraction and hatred—

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।
 समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥
 बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।
 शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥

(XVIII. 50-51)

"That which constitutes the supreme consummation of the Yoga of Knowledge, reaching that perfection how one attains Brahma, Arjuna, know that briefly from Me. Endowed with pure reason, having renounced sound and

other objects of the senses, and controlling the mind and senses by means of Sāttvika restraining power, and eradicating passion and prejudice (one becomes qualified to be one with the Eternal)."

Not only this, so long as attraction and hatred are present, no discipline can attain perfection. Therefore, emphasizing the need for their eradication, the Lord says—

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ हास्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

(III. 34)

"Attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense-objects. Man should never come under their sway, because these are the two main stumbling blocks in his way."

For so long as there is attraction and repulsion unevenness of mind is bound to exist; and so long as there is unevenness of mind, one is far, far away from God. In God-realization, from beginning to end, evenness of mind, or Equanimity, is an indispensable requisite. Whatever may be the discipline one may adopt, without Equanimity it can never reach perfection. While describing the practice of Karmayoga, the Lord said—

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

(II. 48)

"Arjuna, perform your duties dwelling in Yoga, relinquishing attachment, and indifferent to success and failure; Equanimity is called Yoga."

The Lord has also mentioned Equanimity as one of the marks of the devotee, who has attained perfection (XII. 18-19), and instructing Sādhakas in the path of Devotion

to practise this virtue, He declared that devotees who do so are extremely dear to Him—

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥

(XII. 20)

“And the devotee who fully endowed with faith, and solely attached to Me, partakes of the nectar of pious wisdom set forth above, is extremely dear to Me.”

Similarly, in the practice of Jñānayoga, the need for Equanimity has been brought forward with equal emphasis—

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥

(II. 15)

“Arjuna, the wise man to whom pain and pleasure are alike, and who is not tormented by these contacts, becomes eligible for immortality.”

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥
संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

(XII. 3-4)

“Those, however, who controlling all their senses, and even-minded towards all, and devoted to doing good to all creatures, constantly adore as their very self the unthinkable, all-pervading, imperishable, ineffable, eternal, immobile, unmanifest and immutable Brahma, they too, come to Me.”

Going through a course of discipline, when a Sādhaka develops full Equanimity towards all objects, acts, ideas and beings, then alone he is regarded as having attained perfection. Without complete Equanimity, none can be

regarded a perfect Yogī, a perfect devotee and a perfect man of Knowledge.

Wherever the marks of an advanced Yogī have been described, Equanimity has been put forward as quite indispensable—

जितात्मनः प्रशान्तस्य परमात्मा समाहितः ।
 शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु तथा मानापमानयोः ॥
 ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः ।
 युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाज्वनः ॥
 सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु ।
 साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते ॥

(VI. 7—9)

“The Supreme Spirit is firmly established in the knowledge of the self-controlled man whose mind is perfectly calm in the midst of pairs of opposites, such as cold and heat, joy and sorrow, and honour and ignominy. The Yogī whose mind is sated with Jñāna and Vijñāna, who is unchangeable under all circumstances, whose senses are thoroughly subdued, and to whom a clod, a stone and a piece of gold makes no difference, is spoken of as a God-realized soul. He who regards well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals, mediators, the objects of hatred, relatives, the virtuous and the sinful alike, stands supreme.”

In the above verses, cold, heat, clod, stone and gold are ‘objects’; joy and sorrow are ‘ideas’ or thoughts, honour and ignominy are ‘acts’ and friends, well-wishers, foes, etc., are ‘beings’.

He who realizes God through the practice of Devotion, also similarly develops complete Equanimity:—

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥

(VII. 18)

“He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., and is free from attachment (that devotee is dear to Me).”

‘Friend and foe’, in the above verse, refer to beings; ‘honour’ and ‘ignominy’ refer to acts; ‘heat’ and ‘cold’ are objects and ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain’ are ideas or thoughts.

Even so, the Sādhaka who realizes God through the practice of Jñānayoga develops complete Equanimity:—

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥
मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

(XIV. 24-25)

“He who takes sorrow and joy alike, is established in the Self, regards a clod of earth, a stone, and a piece of gold as equal in value receives both pleasant and unpleasant things in the same spirit and views censure and praise alike; he who is alike to honour and ignominy, is equal to friend and foe, and has renounced the sense of doership in all undertakings, he is said to have risen above the three Guṇas.”

In these verses, also, ‘joy and sorrow’ stand for thoughts and ideas; ‘clod of earth’, ‘stone’ and ‘piece of gold’ stand for objects; ‘censure’ and ‘praise’, ‘honour’ and ‘ignominy’ stand for acts; ‘friends’ and ‘foe’ stand for beings, and ‘pleasant and unpleasant things’ stand for all, viz., object, act, thought and being.

The intention of this is to show that in all perfect men, whether they are Karmayogīs, Bhaktiyogīs or Jñānayogīs, complete Equanimity is sure to make its appearance; that is to say, with regard to all objects, acts, ideas and beings, they develop Equanimity in the fullest sense of the term.

The world has produced many a saint. Some of them, like Janaka, etc., (Gītā III. 20) realized God by the practice of Karmayoga; some, like Ambarīṣa, etc., by the practice of Devotion; and some others, like Śukadeva, etc., by the practice of Jñānayoga. Their lives have been described in the scriptures. Among the saints who have reached perfection by the practice of Jñānayoga, the name of Jaḍa Bharata stands very high, and his life and character have become famous throughout the land. The marks of perfection described in the Gītā, Chapter XIV, verses 22—25, are all found true to the latter in his case. The story of his life appears in the Bhāgavata, Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, and other sacred books. A short summary of the same is being given below.

Jaḍa Bharata took his birth in the family of a learned and pious Brāhmaṇa of the Āṅgīrasa Gotra. Though originally his parents had given him the name of 'Bharata', people called him by the name of 'Jaḍa Bharata' because he behaved like a dull-witted, stupid boy. When his age somewhat advanced, his father performed his sacred thread ceremony. His father tried his utmost to impart some learning to the boy, but the latter deliberately kept himself aloof from books, hence no learning could be imparted to him. Far from taking lessons on the Vedas, he could not even correctly read the sacred Gāyatrī. After a few years, his father died, and his mother handing over the care of the boy to the second wife of the Brāhmaṇa,

turned a Satī, burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. The sons of the Brāhmaṇa's co-wife gave up the very idea of imparting any education to the boy and began to neglect him altogether.

Thereupon, Jaḍa Bharata passed his days almost like a lunatic. Honour and dishonour made not the least impression on his mind. People called him mad, foolish and deaf; he readily assented to them. When somebody ordered him to do anything, he would immediately carry out the work, and remained content with whatever food was given to him in exchange for it. He had attained the self-revealed knowledge of Self, gained not as the effect of any cause, the only source of Wisdom and Bliss, hence he could never identify himself with the pleasure and pain caused by pairs of opposites like honour and dishonour, cold and heat, etc. Like a strong bull, he bore on his bare body all the inclemencies of weather like abnormal cold and heat, etc. All his limbs were stout and well-formed. He used to lie on the bare earth, used no unguent and took no bath, hence his body was covered with dust under which his Brahmic effulgence glowed like a precious gem hidden under dust. He covered his loins with a dirty piece of cloth, and his sacred thread was equally dirty. Hence ignorant people used to revile him saying, "Look! there goes the apology of a Brāhmaṇa," "He is a wretched Brāhmaṇa"; but remaining quite indifferent to all such caustic remarks, he freely moved about the land.*

* नित्यनिवृत्तनिमित्तस्वसिद्धविशुद्धानुभवानन्दस्वात्मलाभाधिगमः सुखदुःखयोर्द्वन्द्व-
निमित्तयोरसम्भावितदेहाभिमानः । शीतोष्णवातवर्षेषु वृष इवानावृताङ्गः पीनः संहननाङ्गः
स्थण्डिलसंवेशनानुन्मर्दनामज्जनरजसा महामणिरिवानभिव्यक्तब्रह्मवर्चसः । कुपटावृत-
कटिरुपवीतेनोरुमणिणा द्विजातिरिति ब्रह्मबन्धुरिति संज्ञयातज्ज्ञजनावमतो विचचार ।

When his brothers found that he was maintaining himself by labouring for others, they employed him to arrange the beds of their tilled soils, and he began to perform that work as well. But he did not care to mind whether those beds were even or uneven, or whether they were small or large. The food his brothers gave him contained broken rice, husk, fried beans and scraping of pots, etc., and he ate it, regarding it as delicious as nectar.

On one occasion, the chief of a gang of robbers, impelled by the desire to obtain a son, resolved to offer a human sacrifice to the Goddess Bhadrakālī. Accidentally coming across Jada Bharata, the followers of the robber got hold of him, and tying him hand and foot, brought him to the temple of the Goddess. There they released the boy, gave him a sacramental bath, dressed him with clothes and ornaments, sandal paste and garland and put unguent on his forehead. Thereafter they fed him and offered him worship with incense, light, garland, parched grain, flower, blade of grass, fruit and other eatable according to the rites performed during a sacrifice, and singing songs and praises, and making an oppressive noise by beating drums and tambours they took him before the Goddess and made him sit bowing his head before the deity. Then, a butcher in the guise of the priest of that robber-chief took up a sharp sword consecrated by the Mantra of the Goddess to propitiate Her with human blood. But the Goddess could not tolerate this sacrifice of a perfect soul who had realized Brahma, a disinterested friend to all beings, an innocent Brāhmaṇa lad, whose unbearable Brahmic energy produced a burning sensation in Her body, and suddenly breaking through Her image,

She manifested Herself on the scene. Angrily She snatched the sword from the hand of the priest, and slaughtered all the assembled robbers with that very sword. Truly, a crime committed against a saint brings retribution exactly in the same form. Though faced with certain death, Jaḍa Bharata, who was quite free from identification with his body, and was a lover of all creatures, and had no enemy in the world, and who had surrendered himself entirely to the Lord, felt not the slightest anxiety in his mind; and there was nothing to wonder at this.

On another occasion, Rahūgaṇa, King of Sindhusauvīra, had been going on a palanquin to the Āśrama of sage Kapila, in search of the Knowledge of Self. On the way, reaching the bank of the river Ikṣumatī, he found himself in need of an additional bearer. The chief bearer, discovering Jaḍa Bharata near at hand, quite stout and strong, requisitioned him, and compelled him to act as a bearer to the King's palanquin. Without any resistance the sage (Bharata) took up that role, but mindful not to trample any living creature under his feet, he scanned the earth and cautiously took his steps. This disturbed the rhythm of his steps with those of the other bearers, and the palanquin began to move now straight, and now with a slant. The jolts naturally inconvenienced the King who shouted to the bearers to walk rhythmically and not to move the palanquin in an awkward fashion. The bearers replied that they were going in the proper way, but the new bearer could not keep pace with them, and this made the palanquin go up and down.

The King was angry when he heard this. He ordered Jaḍa Bharata to take his steps properly, but the latter

seemed to turn a deaf ear to it and continued to move as he had been doing before. Again, in great irritation, the King said, “What! Are you dead, though alive? Do you not know that I am your lord? How dare you disobey my order? I shall presently teach you a lesson; then only, it seems, you will come to your senses.”

The King, though otherwise wise and possessed of a good heart, was obsessed with anger and this made him use many harsh and unbecoming words, and abusing epithets, towards Jaḍa Bharata. Such lack of discretion on his part, however, produced not the least change in the mind of Jaḍa Bharata, the friend of all creatures, and thoroughly identified with Brahma. With a smile on his lips, he replied— “O King! What you say is all true. But the fact is that I have no relation with this body; hence I feel no pain when carrying a load, nor get tired through walking. Corpulence, thinness, agony, illness, hunger, thirst, fear, strife, desire, old age, sleep, love, anger, pride and grief—all these happen in the case of the Jīvā, who is identified with the body. I have no trace of these within me. You have spoken of life and death; but these states appear in their appointed time with regard to all things which are subject to change, for they have a beginning and an end. The rule about submission to an order applies only in that case where the relationship of master and servant has been properly established. There is no such relationship between you and me. From the point of view of the ultimate truth, who is a master, and who is a servant? Nevertheless, if you are identified with the idea of mastership, please tell me what services I should render to you? Like a lunatic and a fool, I remain absorbed in my

own state. Therefore, what will you gain by teaching me a lesson? If, really speaking, I am a careless fool, any chastisement practised on me will amount to grinding what is already soft powder.”

Saying this Jada Bharata suddenly became silent. His ignorance having been totally destroyed, he had attained supreme peace. In order to work out his Prārabdha, he lifted the palanquin again on his shoulders. But, hearing those words of wisdom, which agreed with the scriptures, and were powerful enough to snap the bondage of the heart, King Rahūgaṇa, out of reverence, got down from the palanquin, and bowing at his feet, and craving his pardon, said— “Revered Sir! You carry the sacred thread, the mark of the twice-born, on your shoulder. Please tell me, who are you thus walking round the earth concealing your identity? Are you Dattātreya himself, or any Avadhūta of his type? Where did you take your birth, and how happened to be here? I am on my way to the great sage, Bhagavān Kapila, whom I desire to ask who is there in this world in whom one can take refuge? Are you sage Kapila himself?”

In reply to this, revealing who he was, Jada Bharata said—“In my previous birth my name was Bharata, and I was the undisputed sovereign of this land. Getting dissatisfied with the enjoyments of this world and the next, I had retired to the forest and had devoted myself exclusively to the worship of God, yet due to attachment to a young deer, I suffered a fall from my spiritual state and became a deer in my next birth. But on account of the devotion I practised, the memory of my past life continued even in that existence as a deer. That is why

in my present birth as a Brāhmaṇa, being afraid of the association of men, I keep myself aloof from society and walk round the earth concealing my identity. Man should cut the knot of delusion in this very life with the sword of Knowledge derived from the association of saints, who are averse to the attachment of the world; then through the recital and hearing of the sports of God, his remembrance of God will remain unimpaired, and thus easily crossing the world of existence he may realize God. Rahūgaṇa! You are also a way farer in this world of existence; therefore, give up now the profession of chastising the people and become a friend to all beings and remaining unattached to objects cross this world by means of Knowledge sharpened by the practice of devotion to God.”

Thus with various other arguments the great sage instructed the King about the truth of Self and removed his doubts. Thereupon, the King, with utmost humility, fell at his feet and offered him obeisance. Through association with the sage, the King realized the Knowledge of God. And tranquil at heart, and withdrawing his senses, Jaḍa Bharata began to move round the earth, like an ocean, full to the brim.

All the marks of a saint, who has risen above the Guṇas, can be found in the life of Jaḍa Bharata. We shall show this in a nut-shell by comparing his life with the marks appearing in verses 24 and 25 of Chapter XIV of the Gītā.

Before Goddess Bhadrakālī, when the priest raised his sword to make a sacrifice of Jaḍa Bharata, the latter felt no grief, and when the Goddess made short work of his persecutors, he felt no pleasure on that account. He remained established in the Self, and regarded pleasure and

pain alike. Whenever incidents happened calculated to bring him either pleasure or pain, he took his stand steadfastly on the soul, and never allowed modifications like pleasure and pain to shake him from that position. For he was 'समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः', that is, he took 'sorrow and joy alike'.

He remained content with whatever people gave him in exchange for the labour they exacted from him, and regarded a clod of earth, a piece of stone and gold as equal in value. For he was 'समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः' (one who regards a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value).

King Rahūgaṇa had treated him, firstly, in an unfriendly way; and after recognizing his worth became very respectful towards him. But the adverse treatment produced no grief in his mind, and the favourable treatment produced no joy. Having realized the Knowledge of Self, he remained always unaffected by modifications of any sort, and even-minded and stable. For he was 'तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरः' (i. e., regarded both pleasant and unpleasant things in the same spirit).

King Rahūgaṇa at first strongly censured him, and after recognition praised him highly; but the censure produced no sorrow in the mind of the saint, nor the praise produced any kind of pleasure. For he was 'तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः' (i. e. viewed censure and praise alike).

The followers of the robber-chief had tied him with a rope when taking him to the temple of the goddess, and subsequently, when offering him as sacrifice adorned him with clothes and ornaments and offered him worship with incense light and eatables, etc.; but the dishonour of being bound with a rope produced no grief in him, and the

adornment and worship produced no pleasure. For he was 'मानापमानयोस्तुल्यः' (i. e., he treated honour and ignominy alike).

Having resolved to offer him as a sacrifice to the Goddess, the robber-chief had acted as an enemy to him; and the Goddess, who saved his life, acted as his friend. But Jaḍa Bharata was neither displeased with his persecutors, nor pleased with the Goddess, his saviour. For he was 'तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः' (i. e., equal to friend and foe).

Over and above this, in all acts performed by him, Jaḍa Bharata was wholly free from pride. When his brothers engaged him either to look after the field or to the levelling of the beds for planting rice, he carried out those works without being piqued, and similarly when others asked him to do anything he carried out their behests as desired by them. Not only this, when the followers of the robber-chief tied and dragged him to their forest-retreat, he raised no objection, and when the King's men requisitioned his services and forced him to carry the palanquin, he gladly acted as a palanquin-bearer without feeling any offence. All his acts were absolutely free from the sense of doership, for he was 'सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी' (i.e., he renounced the sense of doership in all undertakings).

The marks of the man of wisdom, who has risen above the three Guṇas, as laid down by the Lord in verse 25 of Chapter XIV of the Gītā, appear in toto in the life and character of Jaḍa Bharata. In the above paragraphs, we have briefly tried to compare his character with the marks given in verses 24 and 25 of Chapter XIV of the Gītā. Similarly, the marks given in verses 22 and 23 of the same chapter may be discovered in his character.

Sādhakas, following the path of Knowledge, who are

inclined towards retirement from the world, should read the story of Jaḍa Bharata with particular care and attention. In order to reach the state of the Jñānī who has risen above the three Guṇas, they should regard Jaḍa Bharata as their ideal, and imitate his virtues and conduct.

To all brothers seeking blessedness through the practices of Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Dhyānayoga, Jñānayoga, or any other discipline, it is my humble submission that in order to gain complete evenness of mind towards all objects, acts, ideas and beings, they should try with utmost devotion to advance along their respective spiritual paths, keeping Equanimity in their view from the very beginning of their spiritual career.

□□

Is Mukti Open to All?

There are many people who declare that Mukti is open only to those who have renounced the world and entered the order of recluses (Sannyāsa), and not to the householder. But how far they are justified in saying so, we fail to understand. For a reference to the Vedas, the Smṛti-texts, the Epics and the Purāṇas will show that Mukti is open to all the Varnas (grades of society) and Āśramas (stages of life). Social order, stage of life or pedigree has nothing to do with Mukti: it is one's noble virtues, exemplary conduct, Devotion to God and spiritual enlightenment that make one eligible for Mukti. And this is corroborated not only by the scriptures but by common sense as well.

Here it may be urged that Mukti follows from Jñāna (spiritual enlightenment) alone,— 'ऋते ज्ञानान् मुक्तिः' as the scripture says,—and not from disinterested action, devotion and other such means. This too is not borne out by reason; for the kind of spiritual enlightenment which has been declared as a condition precedent for Mukti follows as a matter of course when the heart gets purified through the practice of disinterested action (Niṣkāma Karma).

The Lord says in the Gītā:—

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत् स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(IV. 38)

“Surely on the earth there is no such purifier as spiritual enlightenment. He who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of disinterested action automatically sees the light of Truth in the self as a matter of course.”

Besides, the Gītā tells us at more than one places of

Mukti resulting from disinterested action (II. 51; III. 19; V. 11-12 and so on).

When Mukti follows as a matter of course even from disinterested action through the light of wisdom flashing automatically on a heart purified by such action, there can be no doubt about Devotion to God leading to final beatitude through spiritual enlightenment. The Lord Himself says in Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā:—

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
 ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥
 तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।
 नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

(X. 10-11)

“On them, ever united in thought with Me and worshipping Me with love, I bestow that Yoga of wisdom by which they come to Me. In order to shower My grace on them, I Myself, who reside in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom.”

Earlier in IX. 32 the Lord says:—

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
 स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

“By taking refuge in Me, O Arjuna, even women, the Vaiśyas (members of the mercantile and agriculturist classes) and the Śūdras (those belonging to the artisan and labouring classes) and even those who are of vile birth attain the supreme goal.”

When Devotion to God has been spoken of as leading—even women, the Vaiśyas, the Śūdras and men of vile birth—to the supreme goal, how can it be said that Mukti is beyond the reach of the householder? How even men of low birth attain blessedness through Devotion to God

is corroborated by Śrīmad Bhāgavata too:—

किरातहूणान्ध्रपुलिन्दपुल्कसा

आभीरकङ्का यवनाः खसादयः ।
येऽन्ये च पापा यदपाश्रयाश्रयाः
शुद्ध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥

(II. IV. 18)

“The Kirātas, the Hūṇas, the Āndhras, the Pulindas, the Pulkasas, the Ābhīras, the Kaṅkas, the Yavanas, the Khasas (Khasis) and other sinful races, no less than others of sinful conduct, are purged of their sins even by taking refuge in those who depend on Him. To that all-powerful Lord we offer our greetings.”

Our sacred books declare that Mukti can be had through devotion, spiritual enlightenment, disinterested action or any other course of discipline by men belonging to all grades of society and stages of life; and numerous instances of this are forthcoming in the Vedas as well as in the Epics and the Purāṇas.

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad we are told how the sage Uddālaka redeemed his son, Śvetaketu, by imparting spiritual wisdom to him. Satyakāma, son of Jabālā, attained oneness with Brahma (the Absolute) through the Knowledge of Brahma by carrying out the behests of his spiritual preceptor, while he was yet a religious student; and Upakosala, a pupil of Satyakāma, also attained Brahmahood by serving his preceptor while he was yet a student. Even so the royal sage Aśvapati and King Janaka, were not only enlightened themselves; but most eminent sages seeking spiritual enlightenment approached them and attained Final Beatitude. Approaching King Aśvapati, Prācīnaśāla and other sages attained wisdom and got liberated.

Maitreyī, wife of the sage Yājñavalkya, attained

spiritual wisdom through her husband. Gārgī, daughter of Vācaknu, attained liberation during her very lifetime; it was she who put questions to the sage Yājñavalkya at the court of King Janaka about the knowers of Brahma. Her anecdote can be seen in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad.

We read in the Kaṭhopaniṣad the well-known story of Naciketā—how he attained spiritual enlightenment through Yama (the god of death) and got liberated during his very lifetime.

Mūka, who was a pariah by birth, realized God by serving his parents; a woman, Śubhā by name, by observing a vow of fidelity to her husband; Tulādhāra, a Vaiśya, through fair and honest dealings; Adrohaka, a saintly person, through ideal virtues and the Vaiṣṇava (a certain devotee of Lord Viṣṇu), through devotion to the Lord. The story of all these has been told at great length in the Sṛṣṭi-Khaṇḍa of the Padma-Purāṇa, which should be referred to in this connection.

In the Pātāla-Khaṇḍa of the same Padma-Purāṇa we are told how King Cola and a Brāhmaṇa, Viṣṇudāsa by name, reached the supreme state through Devotion to God. Śrīmad Bhāgavata tells us how King Ambarīṣa and Bhīṣma, the grand-uncle of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, attained God-realization by dint of their devotion to the Lord; while we read in the Svargārohaṇa-Parva of the Mahābhārata how Arjuna and Draupadī, both of whom were great devotees, attained the highest goal. In the Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa we read the story of a Vaiśya, Samādhi by name, who reached the highest state through the worship of the Divine Mother. Sañjaya, a Sūta by birth, and Vidura, the son of a maid-servant, whose story is told in the Mahābhārata, realized God through Devotion

to the Lord. The story of Śabarī, a Bhīla woman, who attained God-realization by practising devotion to the Lord, has been told in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki.

In this way we find mention at various places in our Śāstras of men and women belonging to all grades of society and stages in life having attained God-realization through disinterested action, worship of God, practice of Yoga and other courses of spiritual discipline. It is neither possible nor necessary to record all such instances in the course of a small article.

The instances quoted above have mostly been taken from among the householders. It is the householder who maintains the members of all the other orders. The Purāṇas have accordingly here and there extolled married life as even superior to all the other stages of life. Hence there can be no doubt about the redemption of those men and women who practise exclusive devotion to God while performing in a disinterested spirit the duties pertaining to their Varna or grade of society and sticking to their home. In the Māheśvara-Khaṇḍa of the Skanda-Purāṇa we read a most interesting and illuminating story, the story of a noble-minded Vaiśya, Nandabhadra by name, who possessed three extraordinary virtues—who performed in a disinterested spirit the duties pertaining to his grade of society and, having understood the reality of all Dharmas, respected all, while practising exclusive devotion to Lord Sadāśiva. For his detailed account we refer the reader to the Māheśvara-Khaṇḍa of the Skanda-Purāṇa. We give below the bare outlines of his life-story for the edification of the readers.

There was a Vaiśya, Nandabhadra by name. Like

another Dharmaraja (the god of piety) he knew the distinguishing features of all Dharmas (sacred duties). Whatever has been said in our scriptures on the subject of Dharma (piety) contains nothing which was not known to Nandabhadra. He was the disinterested friend of all and remained constantly engaged in furthering the interests of all. In thought, word and deed he had pledged himself to the service of others. Nandabhadra had churned the vast ocean of piety on all sides and extracted its essence in the form of service to others.

He recognized upright business as the best means of livelihood and clung to the same. With a little timber and straw he had a small hut built for his residence and with an eye to the public good as well as for keeping his body and soul together he carried on business transactions with a small profit. Spirituous liquor was altogether excluded from his merchandise. He made no distinction between one customer and another and treated all on an equal footing. There was no tinge of falsehood or deceit in his dealings. In selling and buying goods he dealt uniformly with all. Purchasing commodities from others without any wile or trick he sold them to all for the same price without resorting to any unfair deal. This was his noble vow.

Some people extol the performance of sacrifices; but Nandabhadra held altogether different views on the subject. Of course, he devoutly observed the essentials of all sacrificial performances, viz., worship of the gods, making obeisance to them, extolling them, offering them food and so on. There are men who glorify Saṁnyāsa (renunciation of the world); but Nandabhadra did not see eye to eye with them either. He maintained that the man who, having externally renounced the objects of senses,

dwelt on them with his mind fell from the ideal both of a householder and a recluse and losing this world as well as the next, perished like a torn cloud. Nandabhadra certainly had every respect for the essentials of Saṁnyāsa, what is noblest in it.

He neither denounced nor praised the doings of others. He bore no ill will nor attachment to anyone; he neither craved nor felt an aversion for anything. He regarded stone and gold as equal in value and viewed praise and reproach alike. He was strongminded by nature, and was not afraid of any living being whatsoever. He appeared as though he were blind and deaf; in other words, he neither noticed nor heard of others' faults. He had no craving for the fruit of his actions. Hence every action to him was a part of Lord Sadāśiva's worship. That is why, although he wished to and actually did perform his sacred duties, he expected no personal gain from them. After careful consideration Nandabhadra had adopted this virtue, which was the secret of attaining liberation.

There are people who glorify agriculture; Nandabhadra, however, had accepted only the essentials of it. One should part with—devote to sacred purposes—1/30 of one's income from agriculture. Nay, an agriculturist should also maintain old and worn-out animals himself. He alone who does so is an ideal farmer. Nandabhadra had recognized this as the essence of agriculture and respected the same.

One should daily offer food to the gods, the manes, newcomers and the Brāhmaṇas, as well as to sub-human creatures such as birds and beasts, insects and so on. It is desirable that one should take one's daily meals only after offering a part of the cooked food to all these beings

according to one's means. Such was the opinion of Nandabhadra¹.

There are some men who praise power and pelf. Nandabhadra, however, looked upon neither as praiseworthy, for men possessing these think themselves as destined to live long and maltreat others. As a matter of fact, he who is drunk with the pride of pelf goes down in the scale of spiritual evolution and is deprived of his critical judgment. Therefore, recognizing all living beings as one's own selves, one should treat them all as one would treat his own self.²

He who sees his self everywhere never gets intoxicated with power and pelf. That is why Nandabhadra had

1. In the Gītā too the Lord says:—

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥

(III. 13)

“The virtuous souls who eat the remains of a sacrifice are absolved of all sins. Those sinful ones, on the other hand, who cook food for the sake of nourishing their own body alone eat only sin.”

2. In the Bhagavadgītā the Lord says to Arjuna:—

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥

(VI. 29)

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥

(VI. 31)

“He who is established in identification with the all-pervading, infinite consciousness, and sees unity everywhere, beholds the Self as present in all beings and all beings in the Self.”

“Arjuna, he who looks on all as one, on the analogy of his own self, and views the joy and sorrow of all with a similar eye—such a Yogī is deemed the highest of all.”

extracted the essence of power as well. He ministered to all living beings to the best of his ability; he never missed an opportunity for service. Even the gods emulated the noble example of Nandabhadra, the crest-jewel of all pious souls.

In the same locality lived a Śūdra, who was a neighbour of Nandabhadra. Although he was known by the name of Satyavrata (one who is true to his resolve), he was a great unbeliever and a moral rake. He eagerly sought to degrade Nandabhadra from his high morals, if at all he found some weak point in him. Nandabhadra was blessed with a son in his old age, but the latter died. Looking upon the event as a consequence of his own evil destiny, that high-souled Vaiśya sorrowed not. Soon after this Nandabhadra's beloved wife, Kanakā, who like Arundhatī (the sage Vasiṣṭha's spouse) was adorned with all feminine virtues and was an ideal housewife, expired all of a sudden. Satyavrata was transported with joy to get this long-sought-for opportunity. Expressing great regret for the incident, he hurried to Nandabhadra and, meeting him as a friend, said to him, "Nandabhadra, if a pious man like you should be rewarded like this, the conclusion is forced upon me that all this piety and devotion to duty is fruitless. I shall utter words which are free from the eighteen faults of speech and the nine faults of reason.* Extricating myself from the cobweb of the Śāstras and discarding all false theories, I have taken

* The following should be recognized as the eighteen faults of speech: Apetārtha, Abhinnārtha, Apravṛtta, Adhika, Aślakṣṇa, Sandigdha, Pādāntaguru, Parāṅgmukha-mukha, Anṛta, Asaṁskṛta, Trivargaviruddha, Nyūna, Kastaśabda, Atiśabda, Vyutkramābhīhita, Saśesa, Ahetuka and Niṣkāraṇa. A sentence which makes no sense even when uttered is

a vow of speaking the truth. This has earned me the name of 'Satyavrata'. I shall tell you the truth.

"Ever since you took to the worship of a stone (the called 'Apetārtha', (a meaningless jargon). An utterance which fails to bring out clearly the difference of meaning is called 'Abhinnārtha.' A word which is not commonly used is called 'Apravṛtta' (Archaic). A word or sentence without which the meaning of the speaker is quite clear is called 'Adhika' (redundant or superfluous). Ambiguous or unrefined speech is called 'Aślakṣṇa'. That which makes the meaning of the speaker doubtful is called 'Sandigdha' (equivocal). A word which is elongated at the end while uttering it is called 'Pādāntaguru.' A word which conveys a sense quite the reverse of that which is intended by the speaker is called 'Parāṅgmukha-mukha'. A false utterance is called 'Anṛta'. A word or sentence which is ungrammatical is called 'Asaṁskṛta' (incorrect). An utterance which is opposed to the first three objects of human pursuit, viz., religious merit, earthly riches and sensuous enjoyment, is called 'Trivargaviruddha'. A sentence which does not contain words sufficient to bring out the sense of the speaker fully is called 'Nyūna' (insufficiently-worded). A word whose utterance involves a strain on the speaker is called 'Kaṣṭaśabda'. Hyperbolic speech is called 'Atiśabda'. A word which does not follow the proper order of sequence is called 'Vyutkramābhihita.' A sentence which leaves a part of the idea of the speaker unexpressed is called 'Saśeṣa' (incomplete). An utterance which is not supported by logic or adequate reason is called 'Ahetuka' (not well-reasoned). And a statement which is not well-grounded or a word which has been used without sufficient grounds is called 'Nişkāraṇa'.

Lust, anger, fear, greed, abjection, humility, perversity, want of self-respect and impiety are the nine faults of reason. When the speaker, the person spoken to and speech suffer from no fault and are in perfect accord, then and then alone is the meaning of the speaker correctly expressed. When, however, in the course of a dialogue the speaker does not mind the person addressed or when the man spoken to starts ignoring the speaker himself, the speech uttered fails to make any

emblem of Lord Śiva) I do not find you have attained any good results. You had only one boy and that too, is gone. You had a devoted wife; but she too, has left this world. Brother, there are no divinities. All this is fiction. If at all they existed, they should have come to view. All this is a figment of the wily Brāhmaṇas. The creation and destruction of the universe—both these are fictitious. This world naturally exists forever; the sun and the other planets naturally revolve in the sky; the earth is stationary by its very nature; the ocean naturally keeps within its bounds; these multitudinous living beings naturally come into existence; the whole of this universe naturally comes to light. There is no visible maker of it (such as God).

“Rogues declare the human species as the best of all species; but there is no life entailing more suffering than the human life. These birds and beasts, worms and insects, merrily disport themselves without any constraint; birth in these species is most difficult to attain. The creatures that are born in species other than the human species are all blessed. Therefore, Nandabhadra, renounce false religion and merrily eat, drink, sport and enjoy the luxuries of life. This is the only reality on this earth.”

The faith of Nandabhadra, who was extremely wise, was not at all shaken by these mischievous, illogical and fallacious arguments of Satyavrata. He was serene like

impression on the understanding of the person addressed. Besides this, he who casts veracity to the winds and utters words which sound attractive to his own ears or to the ears of the audience leaves the audience in a doubt. Hence such speech too, is faulty. Therefore, he who speaks the bare truth, discarding words which sound agreeable to himself or to the audience, he alone and none other is a veracious speaker.

the waveless ocean. He smilingly replied, "Your contention that pious men ever suffer is unfounded. We find sinners too, being visited by calamities of various kinds. Afflictions accompanying the fetters of worldly life and bereavements caused by the loss of a son, wife and so on are found tormenting sinful men too. Therefore, to my mind piety alone is supreme.

"Another assertion made by you, viz., that the world has no such cause as an Almighty God is but puerile. Can a people exist without a ruler? Besides this, you allege that my worship of a stone emblem of Lord Śiva is fruitless labour. My only submission in reply to this statement is that you know not the glory of a Śiva-Liṅga any more than a blind man knows what the sun is like. After killing the demon king Rāvaṇa on the field of battle Lord Śrī Rāma installed an emblem of Lord Śiva under the name of Rāmeśvara; is it a fiction?"

"Your sweeping remark that there are no gods and that, if at all they existed, they should reveal themselves is causing me great wonder. Just as the destitute beg alms from door to door, do you think the divinities too should likewise approach you and beg alms of you? If according to you everything comes to be of its own accord, tell me how it is that your food cannot be cooked without a conscious agent. Hence whatever is produced in this world must be the work of some conscious agent. As for your statement that these animals and other forms of life alone are happy and blessed, no such thing has ever been stated or heard of by anyone else. If birds, beasts and other animals—who are steeped in ignorance and lacking in many senses and organs—as well as their sufferings are worth envying and deserving of praise, much more

enviable and blessed should be a human being, who is equipped with all the senses of perception and organs of action. To me it appears that this strange vow of truthfulness has been adopted by you only to pave your way to hell. The hollowness of your arguments has been exposed by the very parade of wisdom started by you with a pompous introduction. While you promised to say one thing, you have actually said something quite different. You are, however, not to blame for this; the fault is wholly mine, who listen to your words. An unbeliever, a serpent and poison—these three possess the common property of depriving others of their consciousness. Daily association with pious souls is conducive to virtue. Hence one should cultivate the fellowship of saints and exalted souls who are learned, advanced in age, pure of mind, given to austere penance and devoted to peace. The very sight and touch of evil-minded persons, a talk with them, sharing their seat and dining with them impairs one's pious conduct. Association with low people vitiates one's judgment; fellowship with those of the intermediate class makes one's judgment moderately sound; while the company of noble souls makes one's judgment extremely sound. Remembering this law I have no desire to see you again; for you always revile the Brāhmaṇas and other good people. The Vedas are authoritative; the Smṛti-texts too are authoritative and so are words consistent with virtue and worldly interests authoritative. But who is going to respect the words of a man in whose eye none of these are authoritative?"

With these words the noble-minded Nandabhadra rose from his seat and left the place. He remained ever engaged in the worship of Lord Sadāśiva and, practising devotion

to Him in the aforesaid manner, attained to the highest state.

Our sacred books too enjoin such disinterested action accompanied with devotion.

The Lord Himself says in the Gītā:—

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
 स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥
 यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
 स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

(XVIII. 45-46)

“Keenly devoted to his own natural duty, man attains the highest perfection (in the shape of God-realization). Hear the mode of performance whereby the man engaged in his inborn duty reaches the highest consummation. Man attains the highest perfection by worshipping through his natural duties Him from whom the tide of creation has streamed forth and by whom all this universe is pervaded.”

Therefore, taking refuge in God, everyone should strive his utmost to realize Him by serving the Lord—manifested in the form of the universe, consistent with his grade of society and stage in life.

□□

Feel No Frustration in the Path of God

Many persons after treading the path of God-realization for a long time, and after putting forth their best effort, feel disappointed by their failure and lose heart. But instead of feeling frustrated if they searched for the cause of their failure to achieve Self-realization, they would realize that their own lack of faith and devotion and want of enthusiasm in continuing the practice were mainly responsible for the failure. Just as an avaricious man whole-heartedly and resolutely tries to get rich and employs all his energies and efforts to that end, and avoids all circumstances which might defeat his purpose, similarly if the spiritual and religious practices are carried on with faith, love and enthusiasm the attainment of God would take little time in this age.

The delay which has occurred so far in the realization of the Self or in God-realization should not dishearten an aspirant. He should rather remember the several assurances given by the Lord and should continue his effort with greater vigour. The Lord has affirmed that if one remembers Him even in the last moments of one's life, one undoubtedly attains to Him:—

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन् मुक्त्वा कलेवरम्।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः॥

(VIII. 5)

“He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone even at the time of death, attains My state there is no doubt about it.”

Even the greatest of sinners or the most ignorant can be saved by the true knowledge of God and devotion to Him.

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं संतरिष्यसि ॥

(IV. 36)

“Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners, you will cross over all sin by the raft of knowledge.”

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

(IX. 30)

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved. (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God.)”

And then,

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(IX. 31)

“Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.”

And this real knowledge can be easily attained through faith in God, in saints and the other world, and in the scriptural injunctions. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

(IV. 39)

“He who has mastered his senses, is exclusively devoted to his practice and is full of faith attains Knowledge; having had the revelation of Truth, he immediately attains supreme peace (in the form of God-realization).”

One who is quite ignorant of the Yoga of meditation, knowledge or action, and even lacks discrimination, can be saved by associating with the saints and by following their instructions. The Lord says:—

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(XIII. 25)

“Other dull-witted persons, however, not knowing thus, worship even as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.”

It follows, therefore, that the delay in Self-realization, or in attaining the Lord, is really caused by the lack of faith and enthusiasm in practice. It is essential that the practice must be charged with faith and ardour. The Lord has said in the Gītā:—

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥

(VI. 23)

“That state called Yoga, which is free from the contact of sorrow (in the form of transmigration), should be known. Nay, this Yoga should be resolutely practised with an unwearied mind.”

We should never lose hope. Frustration is harmful and serves no purpose. Why should we be disheartened when the hand of the Lord, our dearest friend, is on our head, blessing us all the time? He Himself has given the assurance that He grants knowledge to one who offers loving devotion to Him:—

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

(X. 10)

“On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me.”

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

(X. II)

“In order to shower My grace on them I, dwelling in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom.”

Our only function is to remember the Lord continuously and at all times. This will easily lead us to Him. The Lord has said:—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII. 14)

“Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogī ever absorbed in Me I am easily attainable.”

Constant remembrance of the Lord generates love for Him and love leads to our attainment of Him. Lord Śiva has said in the Rāmacaritamānasa:—

हरि व्यापक सर्वत्र समाना । प्रेम ते प्रकट होहिं मैं जाना ॥

“For aught I know Śrī Hari is present everywhere alike and is revealed only by love.”

The object of our love always attracts our mind. Our mind naturally clings to things it loves. If we have love for the Lord, our mind will be naturally attached to Him. So it should be our endeavour to cultivate non-attachment to the worldly objects, which attract our senses, and have love for the Lord. Non-attachment can be achieved by looking upon the world and sense-enjoyments as harmful, evanescent and worthless. And love for the Lord can be developed by realizing the value of His name, form, divine qualities and puissance.

In this age of Kali God can be attained very easily and in a short time. Śrī Vyāsadeva has said:—

यत्कृते दशभिर्वर्षेस्त्रेतायां हायनेन तत् ।
द्वापरे तच्च मासेन ह्यहोरात्रेण तत् कलौ ॥

(Viṣṇupurāṇa VI.ii. 15)

“What can be attained through ten years’ austerities in Satyayuga, can be attained in one year in Tretāyuga, in one month in Dvāparayuga, and only in the course of a day and a night in the Kaliyuga.”

ध्यायन् कृते यजन् यज्ञैस्त्रेतायां द्वापरेऽर्चयन् ।
यदाप्नोति तदाप्नोति कलौ संकीर्त्य केशवम् ॥

(Ibid. VI. ii. 17)

“What is attained in Satyayuga through meditation, in Tretā through sacrifices and in Dvāpara through worship, can be obtained in Kaliyuga merely by reciting the name of Keśava.”

The great sage Parāśara says:—

अत्यन्तदुष्टस्य कलेरयमेको महान् गुणः ।
कीर्तनादेव कृष्णस्य मुक्तबन्धः परं व्रजेत् ॥

(Ibid. VI. ii. 40)

“This wicked age of Kali has one redeeming feature that merely by singing the name and qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa man can attain the highest abode of bliss.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa has also said:—

कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास ।
गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास ॥

“No other age can compare with the Kali age, provided a man has faith (in its virtue); for in this age one can easily cross the ocean of transmigration simply by singing Śrī Rāma’s holy praises.”

It follows, therefore, that we should never lose hope but with ardour, worship the Lord remembering Him all the time with full faith and devotion. Then we shall undoubtedly attain to Him sooner than later.

□□

Worthy Motives

Faith has rightly been highly praised by Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā and other scriptures. Nothing accomplishes an object so easily as faith does. And in God-realization faith is the chief means; nay, one cannot proceed on the path without it.

I do not consider myself worthy of being looked upon with reverence by anybody; but if someone cherishing reverence for me profits thereby, it is all due to one's attitude of mind. I cannot claim to possess any excellence, glory or power which might win for me the reverence of others; and yet if a man derives any benefit from his reverence for me, the credit goes to his reverence and not to any power in me. It is true that one can always gain something through the strength of faith, as we do by looking upon and adoring an image of stone or metal as divine.

If a person finds others reposing faith in him and he is looked upon as an impartial gentleman, his words will carry weight with them and they will readily abide by his judgment. Suppose there are two persons who trust me but between them some difference arises alienating one from the other, and recourse to law is contemplated. In such circumstances I call them and remove the misunderstanding and thus a long-standing dispute comes to a sudden end because they believe me to be impartial and accept my verdict. This would be possible only if they have faith in me. From such a point of view no opposition is offered to a person cherishing reverence for me. If a person accepts our advice and reforms himself

accordingly and overcomes his failings, why should there be any opposition to his doing so? Of course, if anyone renders bodily service to an object of his reverence then this should certainly be objected to. My discourses are based upon the Gītā, Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Rāmāyaṇa, Manusmṛiti and similar other religious books. Our Śāstras are the utterances of Ṛṣis, who knew the past, present and future and were great devotees of God; while Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā is the utterance of the Lord Himself. Thus the discourses based on them are, as a matter of fact, the words of saints, Ṛṣis and God Himself. The speaker simply expounds what they have said. It would be an excellent thing if people were to obey those behests for their spiritual upliftment. One is bound to become blessed by moulding one's life according to those noble precepts. They are equally useful for myself as well as for others. And it should be our endeavour to follow the commandments of the Lord and great souls with faith and determination.

If after hearing these precepts for years together one gains very little or nothing, the fault lies with the man ignoring them in practical life. The time spent in hearing the teachings of the Lord as well as of Ṛṣis and Munis was, no doubt, usefully employed; but full advantage from them would have been derived if life had been moulded according to them. What was heard or said in a single day could change one's life completely and if it could be accepted with reverence blessedness could be attained in no time.

Even if one failed to realize God or could not get the company of holy men, reverential obedience to the scriptures can bring about fulfilment. Then it is highly

advantageous to have faith in the devotees of God or saints, or even those who have faith in them. The company of those who tread the path is also very beneficial.

As a last recourse, fulfilment is possible by following the urge of one's own pure mind which is free from selfishness and partiality and maintains equanimity. The voice of conscience may be followed with determination and the dictates of good sense and intentions if pursued would prove helpful. Even if one has no faith in God or in the scriptures or holy men let one be guided by one's own good sense.

In the world we are confronted with dual things or opposites as good and bad, and one should choose the former and eschew the latter. This too, will lead to fulfilment. Contrasting truth with falsehood one must exalt the former and it must be admitted that one has recourse to falsehood under the impulse of avarice or similar temptation, but ultimately truth alone triumphs. Then truth must be our choice. Between service or doing good to others, on the one hand, and doing injury or harm on the other, discrimination must guide us to choose the former course of action, as this choice would be universally endorsed and even those who cannot follow it would certainly approve of it. Similarly one should discriminate between lewdness and continence, between sense-pleasures and renunciation and accept the latter as desirable. Nobody can question the wisdom of such a choice. Even one who has a weakness for the enjoyments of pleasures would admit that control is better than license, because self-control and renunciation confer peace, as is corroborated by the Gītā when it says— त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् (XII. 12)— “peace

immediately follows renunciation.” Those who follow the path of renunciation are universally admired and respected. And it is out of the question to expect respect for one who is a slave to one’s senses and their enjoyments.

In the world there are all sorts of people. If there are some who are honest and trustworthy and look upon others’ possessions and wealth as dirt or poison, which they would never touch, posed against them are also persons who have no scruples in grabbing what belongs to others, and by any means are ever ready to snatch rapaciously whatever they can. They are proud of their greed and their habit of back-biting. Similarly there are people who do not mind encroachment on their rights or property but disdain to usurp what belongs to others. Nay, they have no attachment even for what is rightly theirs. On the other hand, there are people who are so attached to their possessions that they would hold them against all the world at the same time—by theft, deceit, fraud or force—they would take what belongs to others and feel no scruples. Opposed to them there are persons whose things may be stolen and they would feel satisfaction because the thief would be satisfied. If we were to consider the motives and intentions of all these persons, it will be seen that on one side there are persons who are actuated by generosity, unselfishness and renunciation, while on the other side are those who are prompted by rapacity, love of pleasure and plunder. It is quite easy to discriminate between those two tendencies and other dualities and make a wise choice. Thus two categories can be formed which may be called divine and demoniacal. In one category would be placed renunciation, forgiveness,

contentment, discrimination; and in the other would be placed lewdness, anger, greed, delusion and other vices. The divine virtues or qualities lead ultimately to liberation, whereas the vices bring about bondage—‘दैवी सम्पद् विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता’ “The divine virtues are regarded as conducive to Liberation and demoniacal properties as conducive to bondage” (Gītā XVI. 5). It is our good or bad choice that would bring about liberation or involve one in the cycle of births and deaths. It depends upon man’s discrimination to choose wisely and he who makes the right choice with a view to self-redemption will gain fulfilment even if he happens to be an atheist.

By good intentions is meant the desire for the welfare, in this world and hereafter, of all beings as well as of his own self. Actions prompted by such a sentiment are the result of good intentions. And even nobler than this feeling is the desire for the well-being of all others excluding one’s own self. There is one motive ever higher than this and it is to sacrifice one’s own well-being or the fruit of one’s own pious actions and austerities for the sake of others. For example a gathering of some persons may be imagined in which a voice from above is heard saying that one of them would be blessed and get liberation provided the fruit of the joint pious actions of them all was to be transferred to that selected individual. If everyman in response to this voice cried that he should get the fruit, nobody would get it and all would be deprived of the promised fulfilment. But, on the other hand, if any man said that excepting himself all others should be favoured, then his unselfishness would entitle him to the blessed state. If everyone showed this spirit

of sacrifice and unselfishness then the whole company would become blessed and the Lord might appear before them all and grant them His vision.

Renunciation is praiseworthy and it is highly admirable to offer the fruit of one's religious practices, pious deeds, austerities and devotion for the good of others. But nobler than this is the vicarious motive that impels a man to take upon himself the sins of others so that they might escape punishment and attain the blessed state. The Lord blesses such a person before anybody else. But this vicarious motive should not be accompanied by the expectation to receive priority in liberation, because it would taint the motive with selfishness. To sacrifice one's interests for others with a view to awakening reciprocal action is selfishness. Thus the noblest motive is that prompted with which a man takes upon himself the sins of others and removes the obstacles in the way of their attaining the blessed state. It is undoubtedly the noblest sentiment, although I do not claim to be so disposed as to take upon myself the sins of others for their salvation. I am only mentioning it to draw the attention of the readers. Even noble souls feel that such a sacrifice is very difficult for one to make. The renunciation of even one's monetary interests is so difficult; while in this case there is the question of sacrificing one's salvation; and still more difficult is to suffer the consequences of the sins of others. It may be called the supreme sacrifice.

Those who are prompted by good intentions and pure motives are saints and are honoured as such in this and the next world. Here is another illustration of the purity of feeling. Suppose you committed some mistake while

serving me with the best of motives and I asked you not to mind it as it was all due to my ill-luck and not your fault, and still you blamed yourself and my words failed to comfort you, then you were actuated by pure sentiments.

An honest man, even though poor, may be trusted by others and may carry on business with others in commodities worth lakhs of rupees and people dealing with him and relying upon his honesty may even deposit their money with him without asking for interest. His credit may attract large sums unasked. And there is another man who, even though, is a millionaire, has little credit in the market because people know that he is dishonest and they do not like to deal with him as they apprehend that he will dishonestly appropriate their money.

Maharṣi Patañjali says that for one who does not appropriate by theft, fraud or force what belongs to others finds jewels everywhere, because that one is entirely free from the sense of wrongful possession. This means that a man who is trusted finds himself surrounded by riches. On no account does he take what is owned by others. This becomes his settled attitude. It is therefore essential for us that we preserve our integrity and maintain purity of motives. Others' wealth should be as untouchable as filth which is not only foul in itself but befouls by contact other things too, which stink even after they are washed. So, even its touch should be considered contaminating, hands must be washed if by mistake other's money is touched. We have no right to pick up lost things even if we intend to give them away in charity after a fruitless search for the owner. In the latter case something belonging to ourselves should be added while giving away

the thing. In ancient times nobody cared even to touch things lying by the roadside, because they were looked upon as analogous to dirt and filth. They could tempt no wayfarer. But in this age of Kali it is better to pick up things with a view to restoring them to the owners, lest they should fall into the hands of undeserving persons.

An honest man is respected everywhere, whatever his religion may be. It behoves one to rise above temptation and leave others' things as something untouchable. It is proper not to accept such things even when they are offered or donated as gifts. They can be accepted only when their acceptance promotes the interest of or makes for the good of the donor. They are not to be taken for one's own use or enjoyment.

It may be urged that a gift should not be refused lest the giver might feel offended or slighted because his little service was not accepted. But it should be remembered that the spirit of renunciation is beneficial to both the giver and the receiver as they are blessed thereby. The Lord is pleased by renunciation and bestows His blessings on those who unselfishly sacrifice their personal interests. Let us take an example. Suppose as a host a man unselfishly desires to be hospitable to his guest but the latter tries to avoid considerate treatment lest he should be a burden to the host. But the host feels greatly humiliated and pained because even the little service or comfort he offers is not accepted; in that case it is proper for the guest to accept something to please the host. Here the motive of the guest is to please his host and his behaviour is not prompted by any selfish interest. And the host too, does his duty unselfishly and is hospitable as a matter

of duty. The real thing to be considered is the purity of one's motive or intention. And it is this which pleases the Lord and determines His blessing.

No earthly kingdom can procure salvation, which can be attained only by renunciation. Śrī Rāma tried every means to persuade Bharata to rule the kingdom of Ayodhyā for fourteen years; while Bharata desired that Śrī Rāma should be the king. Both of them were reluctant to occupy the throne. And ultimately Bharata had to accept the rulership under circumstances which shed glory on his action and motive. If Bharata had accepted the kingdom according to his mother's design it would have besmirched his fair name and his action would have been blameworthy. Then the censure which the mother justly received would have to be shared by Bharata also. The nobility of his action earned glory for himself and saved the mother also from contumely. When he went to Citrakūṭa to propitiate Śrī Rāma and to persuade Him to return to Ayodhyā, he took all blame upon himself for transgressing the command of Daśaratha and disobeying his preceptor's orders. But he was praised by Śrī Rāma for his singular and unique nobility of motive. If Bharata had accepted the rulership as a result of Mantharā's machinations and his mother's device then his action would have called for censure. One who obeys the sinful command of one's parents drags them to hell with oneself. Things stolen by a person and recovered from his parents involve all of them in trouble. Bharata's motive in calling Śrī Rāma back to Ayodhyā and inviting Him to take up the rulership was high and pure and so was Śrī Rāma's motive in declining the offer. Thus the highest and purest motive is that which is

impartial and accompanied by the spirit of unselfishness and renunciation. Generosity is nobler than justice, renunciation of self-interest is higher than generosity, while disinterested action is even higher than renunciation. Renunciation without disinterestedness cannot be valued highly. Renunciation is better than equanimity and even better than renunciation is disinterestedness, which is the same as renouncing the fruit of renunciation. The highest motive is all in all, and where it reigns all other virtues automatically follow.

□□

The Criterion of True Progress

A man ought to achieve all-round development. All-sided development of man is possible only through the pursuit of Dharma (righteousness) in a disinterested spirit. The pity, however, is that a large number of men abhor the very name of Dharma. As a matter of fact, however they do not know the reality about Dharma. Hence everyone should grasp the true nature and secret as well as the essential characteristics of Dharma. Dharma has been defined as follows:—

यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः ।

(Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras)

“Dharma is that from which follows the attainment of material prosperity and final beatitude.”

That which appears as conducive to good in this world but not so in the other does not fall under the definition of Dharma. Hence all our activities should be conformable to Dharma. This alone can ensure our all-round development. Development can be classified under many heads. Of the various forms of development bodily, material, organic, mental, intellectual, commercial, social, moral and religious development counts more than any other progress.

BODILY DEVELOPMENT

Dharma is most intimately connected with bodily development too. Hence bodily development must be consistent with righteousness. Bodily development is intimately connected with food. A Sāttvika diet is most salutary for the body and that alone is consistent with Dharma. In Gītā (XVII. 8) the Lord has characterized

Sāttvika food as below:—

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥

“Foods which promote longevity, intelligence, vigour, health, happiness and cheerfulness, and which are sweet, bland, substantial and naturally agreeable, are dear to the Sāttvika type of men.”

We should note the aforesaid characteristics of Sāttvika food. Cows' milk and its products (curds, ghee and so on), oil extracted from sesame seeds, almonds, cocoanuts and so on; dry fruits such as almonds, grapes and date-palms; fresh fruits like plantains, pomegranates, grapes, oranges and apples; vegetables such as potatoes, bottle-gourds and pumpkin-gourds and cereals like barley, wheat, gram, rice and kidney beans—all these are Sāttvika in character. Taken in moderate quantities according to one's temperament and physical constitution, these Sāttvika materials make for one's physical and mental development. A Rājasika or Tāmasika diet, on the other hand, proves detrimental to one's bodily and mental health. Hence one should not resort to such a diet. While characterizing diets of a Rājasika and Tāmasika character, the Lord says in the Gītā:—

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।

उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥

(XVII. 9-10)

“Foods which are bitter, acid, salty, overhot, pungent, dry and burning, and which cause suffering, grief and sickness are dear to the Rājasika type of men.”

“Food which is half-cooked or half-ripe, insipid, putrid, stale and polluted, and which is impure too, is dear to men of a Tāmasika disposition.”

Hence we ought to give up diets of a Rājasika and Tāmasika character and should take to a Sāttvika diet alone.

Besides this, exercises such as Yogic Āsanās (poses), wrestling and running in the case of men and performing domestic duties such as grinding flour, spinning, cooking and cleaning one's house and doing other legitimate physical labour is helpful to physical development. As against this indolence, excessive sleep, transgression, immorality, idle gossip, undue exertion and copulation—all these are highly injurious to the body. Hence these should be avoided.

MATERIAL ADVANCEMENT

Material advancement is different from bodily development. It has a wider connotation. It consists in making the five elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth—yield the maximum good to man. In regard to what is now known by the name of physical science or secular knowledge, with the help of which new discoveries and inventions are made, the scientists claim that we are making great progress through such science. Such progress, however, is only partial or one-sided as a matter of fact. The easterners attained a much higher level of material advancement. But the means and the methods adopted by them were different. In fact, they were more developed and effective too. The aerial car known by the name of Puṣpaka and mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa, the airship called Saubha belonging to King Śālva and referred to

in Śrīmad Bhāgavata, mystic weapons presided over by Lord Paśupati, Lord Nārāyaṇa and Brahmā (the creator) and mentioned in our Purāṇas and Itihāsas: the story told in the Mahābhārata as to how the sage Vedavyāsa invoked and presented to the view of the survivors all the eighteen Akṣauhiṇīs of forces that had been slain in battle during the Mahābhārata war many years before, and even gave them an opportunity to talk with the warriors; and the tales of miracles witnessed in the life of the sage Bharadvāja, Lord Kapila and others as a result of mystic powers vividly illustrate this point.

ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT

Likewise we should develop our organs too. Organic development consists in enhancing the purity, health, vigour, sensitiveness, energy, potency and keenness of our organs of sense-perception as well. A man should purify his speech, ears, eyes and other sense-organs. Speech is purified through veracity, suavity, good counsel and taciturnity as well as through the muttering of Divine Names, singing of His praises and stories and the study of holy books. And it is defiled through words which are quite the reverse of such speech. Similarly ears are purified by hearing instructive and salutary words and words praising the virtues and good conduct of others, as well as through talks on devotion, spiritual enlightenment and dispassion; while, on the other hand, our ears are defiled by hearing scandalous reports about others, comments on others' faults and immoral conduct, and idle gossip. Similarly eyes are purified by looking at good people, seeing the good points of others and looking upon others' wives as one's mother; while, on the other hand,

our eyes are defiled by seeing others' faults and evil practices, nasty scenes, pictures and objects exciting passion and looking on others' wives with lustful eyes.

The same remarks hold good in the case of all the other senses. When one's senses get purified and sublimated, their potency is enhanced: e.g., one's eyes begin to see distant objects, one's ears begin to hear distant sounds, and words uttered by one come to be regarded as authoritative and prove true.

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Similarly we should develop our mental capacity too. The latencies of vices and immorality and sinful conduct stored in our mind—these constitute the impurity of our mind. Want of courage to undertake any action represents the feebleness of our mind; while restlessness occasioned by our attachment to the pleasures of sense—this constitutes the evil of distraction (*Vikṣepa*). Hence it is essential to rid our mind of its impurity, feebleness, restlessness and other evils and to make it pure, strong and steady. The mind is purified by performing one's duty in a disinterested spirit, not wishing harm to others, refraining from evil and idle thoughts and contemplating on the names and personality of the Lord. Feebleness of mind is got rid of and its firmness, courage and sobriety enhanced by reposing faith in God; while the evil of distraction is overcome by cultivating dispassion and dwelling on spiritual subjects. Purity, steadiness, courage and strength etc., are infused into the mind and the mental capacity developed by doing so.

For the development of one's mind the Lord has recommended austerity of mind in the following words:—

मनःप्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
 भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥

(Gītā XVII. 16)

“Cheerfulness of mind, placidity, habit of contemplation on God, control of the mind and perfect purity of inner feelings—all this is called austerity of the mind.”

Austerity of mind as described above ensures speedy and lasting development of one’s mind.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Similarly we should develop our intellect too. The intellect is replete with impurity, ignorance, misconception, doubt, unsteadiness and many other faults. They are all got rid of through Sāttvika ideas, disinterested service, fellowship with good men, study of holy books and meditation on God. Hence we should make our intellect Sāttvika. A Sāttvika intellect has been characterized by the Lord in Gītā (XVIII. 30) as below:—

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
 बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥

“The intellect which correctly determines the path of activity and renunciation, what ought to be done and what should not be done, what is fear and what is fearlessness and what is bondage and what is liberation, that intellect is Sāttvika.”

Realizing this, One should try to develop one’s intellect. When a man’s Buddhi becomes Sāttvika, firmness, valour, sobriety, forgiveness, compassion, tranquillity, contentment, equability, guilelessness and other virtues automatically appear in him.

PROGRESS IN ONE'S DEALINGS

Similarly one should make progress in one's dealings too. Our dealings with others' should be characterized by veracity, straightforwardness, self-denial, desirelessness, generosity, love and altruism. In our business transactions we should never resort to falsehood, deceit, thieving and treachery. While purchasing and selling goods we should neither take more nor give less in weight, measure or number. Likewise we should never give to our customers a commodity differing in quality from what we have shown to him by way of sample and should neither give less nor take more than what has been stipulated by us by way of profit, brokerage, commission, rent or interest. We should neither purchase nor sell goods adulterated with inferior or impure stuff nor should we deal in commodities involving destruction of life in a large measure or those connected with meat, wine, eggs, bone, leather and other such impure articles. Our commercial dealings with all should be very cordial, straight, respectful, frank, fair and truthful. In the event of a rise or fall in the prices of any commodity such as foodgrains or condiments, cotton-yarn or textile, jaggery or sugar, steel or cement, one should not have the least scruple in parting with or accepting the quantity stipulated as a part of our transaction with another party nor should we have recourse to dishonesty, much less resile from the transaction, whatever the extent of loss we may have to suffer. If a broker, dealer or agent is at fault through mistake, he should be pardoned and one should cherish the feeling that all individuals connected with him should be benefited to the

utmost degree and should prosper in every way. Through such business one can prosper here as well as hereafter.

SOCIAL PROGRESS

We should similarly achieve social progress too. To entertain friends at a dinner party on the birth of a son, to invite people to take part in a game of playing cards or dice, to offer cigarettes etc., to guests, to accept marriage presents before marriage by coercing the bride's father, to show to one's friends and relatives dowry presents intended to be given to one's daughter and bridegroom, to display fireworks, to entertain the son of a friend or kinsman at a dinner party before his wedding and take him out in a procession, to sing obscene songs during a wedding and on other festive occasions, to treat one's guests to a theatrical performance or other show, to set up illuminations and erect huge pandals, to squander money on show, to entertain friends at a dinner party after the death of one's aged father or grandfather and so on over and above the Śrāddha ceremony and feast to Brāhmaṇas and one's kinsmen as ordained by the scriptures—these and other undesirable customs and usages and other extravagant practices should be stopped. Their elimination forms an essential part of social progress.

MORAL PROGRESS

We should likewise achieve moral progress too. It is very essential to recover our moral degradation. Boys receiving education in our schools and colleges should give up unruliness and love of pranks and behave modestly and in a gentlemanly way with others. Students should cherish a feeling of adoration towards their

teachers. Nay, their behaviour with them should be characterized by reverence, humility and respect and they should bow to them whenever they meet them. Similarly it is the duty of the teacher to behave lovingly with his pupils as though they were his own sons, and to impart good and wholesome instruction to them both by precept and example. Nowadays teachers and students as well as boy students and girl students are found indulging in lewd talk, indecent gestures and filthy jokes, which is a sign of appalling moral turpitude. This should be totally eschewed. Teachers should guard against this evil themselves and should wean their pupils too, from this habit. The modern tendency in schools and colleges is to curtail the hours of teaching and enhance the number of holidays and lengthening the leisure period. This leads to waste or misuse of time. The result is that the study of students suffers. This too, requires to be mended.

Similarly, employees and workmen should desist from unruly behaviour towards the proprietors and managements of industrial concerns. They should do nothing which may prove harmful to the industry or to any official. On the other hand, they should be of maximum help to the industry through their diligence, honesty, obedience and love of discipline, and should always cherish good will towards the authorities and behave well with them. Even so the behaviour of the proprietors as well as of the manager and other officials with their employees and workmen should be full of cordiality, generosity and love. They should always promote the interests of the latter, should regard their joys and sorrows as their own, should never be proud of their own superiority, should never

insult their subordinates nor look down upon them as inferiors. On the other hand, they should regard themselves as no better than workers.

While travelling by rail, one should not have more luggage than the maximum allowed by rules without paying the necessary freight nor should a man travel in a higher class though possessing a ticket of a lower class, much less travel without ticket. A passenger should not occupy more space than the prescribed limit nor should he prohibit anyone from entering one's compartment unless it is fully packed. On the other hand, one's behaviour with all should be loving, fair and generous. Similarly one's conduct in fairs and other congregation should be ideal from the ethical point of view.

If the role of an arbitrator falls to one's lot, one should not be partial to either party through ignorance or infatuation or due to hankering for honour or praise. On the other hand, one's verdict should be strictly impartial, just and based on truth.

Similarly the behaviour of ministers and other high officials, railway authorities, police officers and other government officials should be absolutely unselfish, just and impartial. They should never flinch from morality through love of honour and praise or from fear.

By behaving in an unselfish and disinterested manner as pointed out above one is able to achieve moral progress. This constitutes one's paramount duty and here lies one's welfare.

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS

Similarly one should achieve religious progress too. This lies in developing piety in one's own self and

propagating it in the world as well. Piety or Dharma has been defined as follows by Manu:—

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

(Manusmṛti VI. 12)

“Firmness, forgiveness, subjugation of the mind, non-thieving, external as well as internal purity, control of the senses, correct judgment, sagacity, truthfulness and freedom from anger—these are the ten characteristics of piety.”

Such is the common religion of humanity. This is directly conducive to the highest good of man here as well as hereafter. Details regarding Dharma have been most unambiguously and beautifully told in the scriptures and should be seen there. The duties of the four Varnas or grades of society, for instance, have been mentioned in Gītā XVIII. 42—44 and Manusmṛti I. 88 to 91. Further details regarding the duties of the four Varnas and four Āśramas (stages in life) can be seen in Discourses II to VI of the Manusmṛti.

A man should sacrifice his personal interest for the sake of Dharma, even as Yudhiṣṭhira sought to have his half-brother Nakula alone restored to life, caring not the least either for sovereignty or for his co-uterine brothers, and turning a deaf ear to the remonstrances of the Yakṣa (vide Mahābhārata, Vana-parva, Dis. 313). He spurned heaven itself for the sake of Dharma but did not abandon even the dog that had accompanied him to the Himālayas (Ibid., Mahāprāsthānika Parva, Dis. III).

During recent times the boys of Guru Govind Singh of revered memory laid down their life for the sake of Dharma. They allowed themselves to be piled in a wall rather than renounce their faith.

In the historical fortress of Cittorgarh thirteen thousand Rājapūta ladies consigned themselves to the flames in order to preserve their honour and virtue. Even so he who does not renounce his faith even when faced with a calamity, attains final beatitude. This is corroborated by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who says in the Gītā:—

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः ।

“Death while adhering to one’s faith is conducive to blessedness.”

Besides this one should afford relief in every way to distressed humanity on the occasion of floods, earthquakes, famines, epidemics, conflagrations, fams etc. Service should be rendered to the fair sex too while looking upon them as one’s own mother. Morality, impartiality and righteousness should never be sacrificed from fear, selfishness and attachment or for the sake of honour, fame, prestige and bodily comfort. And our dealings with all should be characterized by liberality, compassion, selflessness, desirelessness, modesty and love.

While pointing out the essence of piety Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa:—

परहित	सरिस	धर्म	नहिं	भाई ।
पर	पीड़ा	सम	नहिं	अधमाई ॥
परहित	बस	जिन्ह	के	मन माहीं ।
तिन्ह	कहुँ	कछु	दुर्लभ	जग नाहीं ॥

“There is no piety like doing good to others and there is no meanness like oppressing others. Nothing in this world is difficult to attain for him in whose mind the good of others occupies a permanent place.”

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa too says in the Gītā:—

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ।

(XIII. 4)

“Devoted to the good of all living beings, they attain to Me alone.”

All this is included in religious progress. Hence in every dealing of ours we should make it a point to minister to the comfort of others even though enduring hardships ourselves, and that too, in a purely disinterested spirit—not with the motive of gaining honour, fame, prestige, etc., nor with a view of achieving one’s own selfish end.

In this way if we conduct ourselves in the world in a selfless, altruistic and disinterested spirit, aiming at God-realization, progress of all kinds mentioned above takes a spiritual turn, that is, tends to blessedness. Just as devotion, spiritual enlightenment and dispassion make for final beatitude, the aforesaid types of progress too, lead to the spiritual good of humanity when accompanied by the cultivation of ideal virtues and good conduct.

□□

The Supreme End of Human Pursuit

There are four objects to be attained in the world, viz., religious merit, earthly possessions, sensuous enjoyment or sense-gratification and final beatitude. In attaining religious merit and final beatitude out of these four ends personal endeavour plays a predominant part; whereas in the attainment of the other two, viz., wealth and sense-gratification, destiny plays the leading role. Notwithstanding this fact people strive unweariedly for wealth and sense-gratification. But their exertion proves of no avail. Therefore, indulging in no speculation whatsoever with regard to the pleasure or pain that comes to us, we should take it to be a dispensation of Providence. In the Rāmacaritamānasa too, we read:—

होइहि सोइ जो राम रचि राखा ।
को करि तर्क बढावइ साखा ॥

“After all, that alone which has been pre-ordained by Śrī Rāma will come to pass; why should one add to the complication by indulging in further speculation!”

For, man is ordinarily free to perform an act, but has no choice in the matter of reaping its fruit. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(II. 47)

“Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. Do not be an instrument in making an action bear fruit

(in the shape of pleasure or pain hereafter), nor let your attachment be to inaction."

Hence, regarding the attainment of sensuous enjoyment and wealth as predetermined, and effort as a mere occasion for it, one should never indulge in a sinful act for attaining them. For, that alone, which has been allotted to us, will come to pass. Why, then, we add to our encumbrances by committing sin? Hence, it is sheer folly on our part to perpetrate sin for the sake of wealth and sense-gratification.

But this does not mean that we should become indolent giving up all activity. As a matter of fact, none can remain actionless even for a moment. Man remains engaged in some activity or the other almost every moment. If he indulges in sin and shirks his duty, he undergoes suffering in hell in consequence. Therefore, far from indulging in a sinful or useless act, man should not do anything even with a view to attaining sensuous enjoyment and wealth. On the other hand, he should do his work as a matter of duty in a disinterested and detached way for his spiritual good through purification of the self.

The Lord says in the Gītā:—

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।
योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥

(V. II)

"The Karmayogīs perform action only with their senses, mind, intellect and body as well, withdrawing the feeling of mine in respect of them and shaking off attachment, simply for the sake of self-purification."

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।
अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते ॥

(V. 12)

“Offering the fruit of actions to God, the Karmayogī attains everlasting peace in the shape of God-realization; whereas he who works with a selfish motive, being attached to the fruit of actions through desire, gets tied down.”

Therefore, the right thing is to perform one's duty in a disinterested spirit; for personal endeavour alone plays the predominant part in the observance of piety and the attainment of final beatitude. So man should make special efforts in this direction alone; for it is for these alone that human life has been vouchsafed to us. The usefulness of a human life lies in God-realization, which is the supreme end of human pursuit. Destiny has nothing to do with it. Destiny is neither a hindrance nor a help to the redemption of one's soul. People give up or relax their efforts for the attainment of this supreme end of human endeavour in the shape of God-realization on the loss of their wife, son or wealth and health etc. This constitutes their weakness; and their stupidity alone is responsible for it. Therefore, a thoughtful person should whole-heartedly pursue a course of discipline, technically known by the name of Yoga, for attaining God-realization. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

तं विद्याद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥

(VI. 23)

“That state, called Yoga, which is free from the contact of sorrow (in the form of transmigration), should be known. Nay, this Yoga should be resolutely practised with an unwearied mind.”

We have not been endowed with this human frame for indulging in luxuries and enjoyment. Enjoyments like

taking food, sleep, copulation etc., are available to a living being even in subhuman species such as animals and birds etc. The human body has been allotted to us only for attaining final beatitude in the form of God-realization and for the practice of piety. We read the following in the Cāṇakyanīti:—

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनानि
समानि चैतानि नृणां पशूनाम्।
ज्ञानं नराणामधिको विशेषो
ज्ञानेन हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥

(XVII. 17)

“Taking food, sleep, fear and copulation—these are common to (both) men and beasts. Reason or understanding is an additional characteristic of human beings. Men devoid of understanding are no better than brutes.”

Therefore, one should strive hard to attain that pious end of human pursuit, viz., true knowledge of God, by whatever means it may be possible. That man alone who is able to achieve the purpose for which a human body has been vouchsafed to him, shaking off evil propensities like lust and anger, greed and infatuation, while still alive, can be established in Yoga (harmony) and enjoy real happiness. The Lord too, has declared in the Gītā:—

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात्।
कामक्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥

(V. 23)

“He alone who is able to stand, in this very life before casting off this body, the urges of lust and anger is a Yogī; and he alone is a happy man.”

He, however, who, even after getting a human body, leads a life steeped in lust and anger, greed and infatuation, remains deprived of God-realization and descends into a

terrible hell. Therefore, entirely giving up evil propensities and immoral practices, one should spend one's time in devotion, spiritual enlightenment, dispassion and right conduct for the redemption of one's soul. The Lord too, has struck the following note in the Gītā:—

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥

(XVI. 21)

“Desire, anger and greed—this triple gate of hell brings about the ruination of the soul. Therefore, one should avoid all these three.”

एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।
आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥

(XVI. 22)

“Freed from these three gates of hell, man works his own salvation and thereby attains the supreme goal, i.e., God.”

This human body is immensely valuable and has been attained through extreme good luck and exceptional grace of God. Therefore, it should not be devoted to the pursuit of wealth, gratification of the senses and luxuries; for the notion of joy inhering in the body, the world and luxuries is an outcome of ignorance. In fact, there is no joy in them. All these are perishable, momentary and fleeting. Therefore, men of sound judgment should not feel attached to these; they should rather spend their time in adoration of and meditation on God, offering service and worship to Him, bowing to Him and in hymning Him and praying to Him. Says the Lord:—

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥

(Gītā XI. 33)

“Therefore, having obtained this joyless and transient human life, constantly worship Me.”

Besides this, one can attain the highest end of human pursuit in the shape of final beatitude by performing one's duty in a detached manner according to one's grade in society and stage in life. The Lord tells Arjuna in the Gītā:—

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

(III. 19)

“Therefore, go on efficiently doing your duty without attachment. Doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme.”

Arjuna was a Kṣatriya; therefore, encouraging and urging him to remain devoted to the duties of a Kṣatriya, which constituted his own duties, the Lord says:—

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥

(Gītā II. 3)

“Yield not to unmanliness, Arjuna; ill does it become you. Shaking off this paltry faint-heartedness stand up, O scorcher of enemies.”

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥

(Gītā II. 31)

“Besides, considering your own duty too, you should not waver; for there is nothing more welcome for a man of the warrior class than a righteous war.”

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

(Gītā II. 38)

“Treating alike victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, get ready for the fight; then fighting thus you will not incur sin.”

Similarly, people belonging to other Varnas and Āśramas too, should make concentrated efforts for the redemption of their soul in a detached manner and a disinterested spirit. If a man striving hard for the redemption of his soul as aforesaid, lays down his life at the altar of duty, he is rewarded with blessedness.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

(Gītā III. 35)

“One’s own duty, though devoid of merit, is preferable to the duty of another well performed. Even death in the performance of one’s own duty brings blessedness; another’s duty is fraught with fear.”

The Lord has spoken very highly of the disinterested performance of one’s duty; for even a little of one’s duty performed in a disinterested spirit leads to blessedness.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

(Gītā II. 40)

“In this path (of disinterested action) there is no loss of effort, nor is there fear of contrary result. Even a little practice of this discipline saves one from the terrible wheel of birth and death.”

He, however, who, having obtained a human body, falls off from his duty, is as good as dead though living because he leads a useless and reproachful life.

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

(Gītā III. 16)

“Arjuna, he who does not follow the wheel of creation thus set going in this world (i.e. does not perform his duties) sinful and sensual, he lives in vain.”

Therefore, a man should never swerve from his duty nor should he fritter away his life in luxury and error. With reference to those who having secured a human frame spend their life in sense-enjoyments, Śrī Tulasīdāsa says:—

नर तनु पाइ विषय मन देहीं । पलटि सुधा ते सठ विष लेहीं ॥
ताहि कबहुँ भल कहइ न कोई । गुंजा ग्रहइ परस मनि खोई ॥

For, this human body has been allotted not for sensuous enjoyment here or hereafter but for the redemption of the soul.

एहि तनु कर फल विषय न भाई । स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई ॥

“Sensuous enjoyment, brethren, is not the be-all and end-all of human existence; even heavenly enjoyment is short-lived and ends in sorrow.”

But many a man remits his Sādhana (spiritual endeavour) considering destiny to be the main factor in God-realization, which is the highest end of human pursuit as well as of the practice of piety. Such irreverent and doubting persons remain deprived of final beatitude—the highest end of human pursuit—through folly. They find happiness nowhere.

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति ।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः ॥

(Gītā IV. 40)

“He who lacks discrimination, is devoid of faith, and is at the same time possessed by doubt, is lost to the spiritual path. For the doubting soul there is neither this world nor the world beyond, nor even happiness.”

Therefore, resolving doubt through right knowledge a man should make a supreme endeavour for the performance of his duty.

Ways of Deriving Benefit from the Fellowship of Saints

The question is: How should a striver turn to account his meeting, whenever it may take place, with an exalted soul, a saintly personage? The measure of gain through the fellowship of exalted souls depends upon the intensity of one's reverence and faith. One is benefited in a special degree by carrying out their orders. If there is reverence for them, their sight and speech, conversation with them, nay, their fellowship and living in proximity with them—all continue to be conducive to our good. The greater our reverence towards them the more do we gain through them. But even with scant faith one can gain a lot by carrying out their orders. Of course, this much must be recognized that the word of an exalted soul is the word of God and that by following his precept we shall surely attain blessedness. With this much of faith man is benefited to a special degree by following the precepts of an exalted personage.

Exalted souls of a superior order do not give orders. Under such circumstances the reverent can derive benefit from their hints, nay, even from their principles as well as from their conduct, which is ideal. We can derive special benefit by recognizing exalted souls as our ideal. By following their example, behaving exactly as they do, we can be amply rewarded.

The Gītā says:—

यद्यदाचरति	श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो	जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं	कुरुते	लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

“For whatever a great man does, that very thing other men also do; whatever standard he sets up the generality of men follow the same.”

Lord Śrī Rāma was God Himself, the Supreme Person who was at the same time our Ideal Man, the Mahātmā of Mahātmās. To walk in His footsteps is all the more profitable. Moulding one's behaviour according to the conduct of Mahātmās is itself conducive to final beatitude. How much more should we gain if God Himself came down in our midst and we followed His example.

Some people say that Mahātmās should certainly be obeyed but not be imitated. I am, however, unable to reconcile myself with this view which is not reasonable either. If such were the case whom shall we follow? It is exalted souls alone who are worth imitating. They are of two types:—(1) God-realized souls who are great souls undoubtedly; and (2) the Mahātmā of Mahātmās, namely, the Lord Himself.

We should behave in the same way as Lord Śrī Rāma did. We should treat our parents in the same way as Lord Śrī Rāma treated His own parents. Our behaviour towards our aunts both on the paternal and the maternal sides, mothers-in-law and other ladies of the same rank should conform to that of Śrī Rāma for His stepmothers Sumitrā and Kaikeyī. In dealing with our brother and other kinsmen too, we should follow the example of Śrī Rāma. We should treat our wedded wife in the same way as Śrī Rāma behaved with the divine Sītā, the daughter of Janaka. Our behaviour towards our sons should be like that of Lord Śrī Rāma towards Lava and Kuśa. Lord Śrī Rāma's behaviour towards His subjects should be the pattern of our behaviour towards our dependents and

subordinates such as our personal attendants and other domestic servants, accountants and clerks etc. The Lord's behaviour towards His contemporary sages and seers should be our guide in our dealings with hermits, Brāhmaṇas, Mahātmās, enlightened souls and devotees. In short, all our dealings should be modelled on His pattern. Our life itself should be moulded according to His ideal. By doing so a man redeems himself very soon. Through such practice we are not only reminded of God again and again, but by dwelling on His moral excellences we imbibe those virtues and this goes to improve our conduct. His remembrance alone leads to the purification of our soul and can set it on the way to final beatitude; for, like the sight, speech and touch of the Lord and conversation with Him His thought alone is enough to redeem the human soul.

The Lord is no longer with us in His embodied form but is present in His all-pervading aspect. His pastimes and exploits too, find mention in holy books. From these books we can know that the Lord behaved in such and such a way with such and such a person. Guided by these accounts we too, should behave as occasion demands. Along with it, we should try to get a glimpse of the Lord's excellences, glory, truth and mysteries in His sports.

Take, for example, the following Līlā of the Lord. After the conquest of Laṅkā, the Lord is returning to Ayodhyā along with Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and others. Every single gesture of His is worth imitating. He is holding conversation with the monkeys and the Rākṣasas during the passage. He is also chatting with His consort, Sītā, the Divine Mother of the universe, and is showing Her the scenery along the aerial route. He is saying to the

monkeys “Yonder is the city of Ayodhyā, My birth-place. Here is the river Sarayū; a bath in it is rewarded with final beatitude. Residence in Ayodhyā too is conducive to emancipation. The city is dearer to Me than My Divine Abode, Vaikuṇṭha, itself.” Side by side He is cutting jokes too, with them. Our behaviour with our juniors and those who follow us should be equally sweet and loving. On reaching Ayodhyā Lord Śrī Rāma meets the sages and ascetics after bowing at their feet. We should behave with our elders in the way as Śrī Rāma did with the sages on that occasion. He deals with His brothers too, as propriety in the case of each of them demands. Overwhelmed with love, all His subjects rush forth to have a sight of the Lord and the Lord meets with equal warmth of feeling and cordiality, most lovingly and respectfully everyone of them according to their respective rank. On such occasion we too, should meet everybody in a similar way. The question now arises—‘How to discern the excellences, glory, truth and mystery of the Lord in the particular Līlā?’ Careful thought would reveal that His Līlā is full of excellences at every step. The Lord’s behaviour is imbued with compassion, love and politeness. His behaviour towards His seniors is marked with politeness, and that towards the juniors is characterized by love and compassion. Similarly, His glory too, should be discovered in His dealings. Assuming endless forms He meets all at one and the same moment, according to the status of each one of them separately, without any trace of self-esteem! What a unique glory of the Lord it was! Now let us try to peep into the inwardness of this exploit of the Lord. Why were the residents of Ayodhyā exceptionally dear to Him? In the words of the Lord Himself, hardly any one knows

the secret of it. He revealed through this statement that the people of Ayodhyā loved Him most dearly. That was the reason why they were extremely dear to Him. Śrī Rāma was, no other than the integral Divinity, the Oversoul. This constitutes His reality. In this way we should try to discover His excellences, glory, reality and mystery in every pastime of the Lord and derive some lesson from the Līlā. His dealings are imbued through and through with morality, piety, love and politeness. Our dealings too, should conform to this ideal. They should likewise be imbued with morality, righteousness, love and self-abnegation.

In the same way we should walk in the footsteps of exalted souls who have flourished in any part of the world in the past or who have been vouchsafed to us at present by grace of God. Their orders should be obeyed, their hints followed. Hint means a covert suggestion silently made or a question asked out of curiosity. Suppose he asked you, "I hope your Japa and meditation are going on? Isn't it?" You should start the practice of Japa and meditation on his inquiring thus, unless you are doing it already. Veiled in the garb of a question it is a hint thrown to you by him that you should do that. And if he directly urges you to do something, you should deem it your good fortune. To urge or incite a man to do a certain thing and to enjoin him to do so carry almost the same meaning. A prompting is expressed in the following terms:—"One should get up very early in the morning. Bathing before sunrise, one should start saying his Sandhyā prayers and repeating the holy Gāyatrī, if one is invested with the sacred thread. The scriptural ordinance, as a matter of fact, is that the Sandhyā prayers should be commenced still

earlier even while there is night and the Gāyatrī-Japa should be continued right up to sunrise.” To those who are not authorized to do Sandhyā and Gāyatrī-Japa, that is to say, who are not invested with the sacred thread—as for example women, the Śūdras and infants—the aforesaid exalted soul may address the following admonition:— “Japa of the Divine Name and meditation on the Divine essence, recitation of the Gītā, worship of the Lord through a mental or concrete image, offering prayer to God for the redemption of one’s soul and hymning the praises of God—these are compulsory and must be done. When disposed to sleep, we should let sleep overtake us while recalling to our mind the Lord’s name and form, pastimes and Divine Abode, excellences and glory, truth and mystery of God. Or if the object of one’s faith, love and reverence is the attributeless and formless Absolute, one should go to bed while meditating upon the Reality that is devoid of Attributes and Form. And our mind should be directed towards God even while we are engaged in some activity.” This is for all practical purposes a sort of command, actually worded as an admonition. Suppose on our submitting in reply to the aforesaid query “What you say is absolutely true, some effort is also made accordingly; but I am unable to concentrate my mind on God.” The Mahātmā advises us to continue the practice even if the mind refuses to co-operate; this constitutes a clear injunction from the Mahātmā. Proceeding further if he says, “Unremitting effort will bring the mind under control,” that will be a benediction from him in that he foretold something relating to the future. In other words, that is something like a boon from him. “Do this work! Do it in this way!!”

That is a command or injunction. "If you do a certain thing, your effort will surely be crowned with success!" That is a sort of blessing or boon.

We can gain much even by living in proximity with a saint. By continuing to watch his facial expressions and gestures, his glances etc., they get imprinted on our heart. While we are busy doing something, their memory is awakened in our heart and our actions are influenced to a large extent by such memories. Leaving other things out of consideration, the sight alone of exalted souls leaves impressions of their form and character on our heart and along with their character their virtues too, get mirrored in our heart. When we see an exalted soul do a good turn to another, the impression is made on our mind that he is extremely compassionate, most noble-minded. If we are exceptionally reverent towards him, the sentiments of his heart begin to be reflected in ours. In consequence of our living near him our knowledge of his principles and beliefs goes on increasing and in course of time our principles too, get remodelled according to his. Every action of a great soul is full of lessons for us. It is imbued with propriety, righteousness, spiritual enlightenment, dispassion and morality. If we are reverent towards him, we not only get a clear view of them but feel inspired at the same time to emulate him. Such a prompting is very useful. If such promptings recur to us again and again we can some day turn out to be a replica of the archetype.

I had the rare good fortune of seeing exalted souls in my childhood. I am often reminded of them and their memory has done me immense good. This leads me to conclude that you too, should be benefited in a special degree by treasuring the memory of great souls. By

recalling the life incidents of great souls one feels inclined to follow in their footsteps, and consequently some effort is also put forth in that direction. If no more, the memory of such incidents makes some impression at least on the heart. The greater the degree of our reverence towards an exalted soul, the stronger are the impressions made on our heart by his conduct. These impressions give rise to like impulses for action, which in their turn lead to similar actions. In this way if we take our thoughts back to the conduct of an exalted soul—whenever there is occasion for it, our conduct too, begins to take a similar turn. The noble sentiments throbbing in the heart of exalted souls decidedly react on the heart of the man who enjoys their fellowship and in course of time he too can turn out to be a saint of equal worth. To cultivate the fellowship of saints, to live in close proximity with them, to act according to their hints, to carry out their commands and to live under their control—these are the factors most helpful to him—who aspires to become a saint—in attaining sainthood. All these expedients are in a way calculated to heighten love and reverence for exalted souls. By recourse to these expedients even a striver can become a saint in course of time. In this way it has been briefly pointed out above how to derive benefit from the company of exalted souls if by God's grace we come across such saints.

The Lord tells Arjuna the procedure of attaining wisdom as follows:—

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

(Gītā IV. 34)

“Arjuna! Understand the true nature of that knowledge.

Those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge.”

Here arises the question: “How to attain that knowledge?” The answer to it is supplied by the words ‘प्रणिपातेन, परिप्रश्नेन, सेवया’ i.e., by prostrating at their feet, rendering them service and questioning them with an open and guileless heart. Now what is that service which a seeker of knowledge is expected to render to a man of wisdom? Obedience to them is the form of service required of him. No other service is equal to it. In Tulasīdāsa’s Rāmāyaṇa, Lord Śrī Rāma too, says the same thing to His subjects in the course of His sermon:—
सोइ सेवक प्रियतम मम सोई । मम अनुसासन मानै जोई ॥

“He is My servant and he is dearest to Me, who carries out My behest.”

‘Tama’ is a Taddhita suffix applied to adjectives in Saṁskṛta in order to convey the sense of the superlative degree. He, who is dear, is termed as ‘Priya’ while he who is dearer in comparison to another is called ‘Priyatara’ and he who is most beloved of all others is spoken of as ‘Priyatama’. For example, the husband of a faithful and devoted wife is dearest to her. In the line quoted above Lord Śrī Rāma acknowledges him alone as His servant in the true sense and him alone as dearest to Him, who respects His authority, carries out His behest. Obedience to one’s master and preceptor has been particularly glorified in the scriptures. We reproduce below an ancient legend which lays special stress on obedience:—

There was a religious student, Satyakāma by name, son of Jabālā, who lived in the house of his teacher. The Guru commanded him to take his four hundred cows to the woods, pasture them and to bring them back when

their number mounted to one thousand. Satyakāma was confident in his heart of hearts that he would attain blessedness through obedience to the preceptor's command. He acted accordingly. Gradually the cows multiplied to a chiliad. Then one of the bulls spoke to Satyakāma as follows: "Our number has reached the figure of one thousand. The preceptor's object has been achieved. Now take us back to his hermitage." Satyakāma said, "Amen!" Accordingly he proceeded with the cows to his teacher's hermitage. While he was yet on the way he was blessed with God-realization. When he reached the hermitage, the Guru looked at his countenance and said, "Your very face, blooming like a lotus, bespeaks your having attained divine wisdom. Very great peace is seen on your face." Satyakāma submitted, "This has been possible by your grace alone; but I long to hear something about spiritual enlightenment from your lips." The Guru instructed him in spiritual wisdom. It is to be noted in this connection that true knowledge of God dawned on the mind of Satyakāma as a matter of course even while he was engaged in carrying out the Guru's behest. It should be much easier for us, then, to attain true wisdom by carrying out the behest of exalted souls. Even if a preceptor is not a Mahātmā, obedience to him is of very great consequence. If, on the other hand, there is an exalted soul and we look upon him as our Guru, wisdom will surely dawn upon us as a matter of course. Mental attitude is the main factor in redeeming one's soul.

Let alone obedience, even the fellowship of saints does good to our soul in every way. Satsaṅga has been spoken very highly of in the scriptures. The demoness, Laṅkinī, says to Hanumān in the "Rāmacaritamānasa"—

तात स्वर्ग अपवर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग।
तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग॥

“In one scale of the balance, dear son, put together the delights of heaven and the bliss of final beatitude; but they will all be outweighed by a moment’s joy derived from the fellowship of saints.”

Here it may be urged: “What has been said above with regard to heaven is quite true: for the delights of heaven are short-lived indeed. But we fail to understand how the joy of Satsaṅga has been declared superior even to the bliss of final beatitude.” Our answer to it is that ‘Sat’ is a name of God, and love for Him is what is really meant by ‘Satsaṅga’. ‘Satsaṅga’ in this sense is ‘Satsaṅga’ *par excellence*, which lovers of God regard as superior even to final beatitude. The other meaning of ‘Satsaṅga’ is the fellowship of God-realized souls. ‘Satsaṅga’ understood in this latter sense too is very highly spoken of. Suppose God descends at any time on the earth and one gets the privilege to live and move about with Him with a view to redeeming men in the world, can the unearthly joy that will be experienced in such company ever be found in final beatitude?

A man fills his own tummy, while another feeds a number of hungry and disabled souls starving for want of food. The joy which is had in feeding many a hungry and disabled souls cannot be had in taking food oneself. Even so, it is difficult to gauge the extent of joy which a devotee would experience in moving about with exalted souls of the type mentioned above carrying blessedness to the people. And if one secures the fellowship of the Almighty Lord Himself, there is no end to the joy experienced by that devotee. Therefore, it is clear that the

joy which one finds in propagating Devotion in the world and in redeeming the afflicted and forlorn creatures of the world cannot be had in final beatitude.

On the one hand, a person attains Liberation by giving up the ghost within the precincts of Kāśī—for the scriptures proclaim that Mukti follows as a matter of course after death in Kāśī (काश्यां हि मरणान्मुक्तिः); while, on the other hand, Lord Śiva makes at Kāśī a free gift of Mukti to one and all who die there. Of the two the joy that is experienced by Lord Śiva can never be had by him who dies in Kāśī. In any case one should pray to the Lord in the following strain:—"Lord, I do not hanker after Mukti. Let Mukti continue to be vouchsafed to all through me. Let myself be born again and again if You so please. I am not at all worried over it." Immense will be the joy experienced by him who continues to enjoy the partnership of exalted souls in their business of bringing Mukti within easy reach of all. When the fellowship of a saintly soul is once obtained it should not be voluntarily given up by oneself as far as possible. "And suppose the Mahātmā himself abandons you?" it may be asked. To this our reply is that it is not in the nature of a saint to forsake anyone.

Dharma, God and exalted souls only know how to capture souls and not to let them go. It is not their wont to discharge him who has but once been seized by them. Of course, if we ourselves leave them, that is a different thing. If anyone renounces or disowns Dharma, Dharma cannot help it. But Dharma never forsakes those who do not renounce Dharma. When a man dies, his friends and relatives accompany him to the crematory and leaving his burning corpse there, return home. Dharma is his only

companion that accompanies a person even beyond death. If, by God's grace, one secures the fellowship of an exalted soul nothing else is needed. We would go in for any other treasure only if it were more valuable than such fellowship, which is excelled by God Himself, who will come to us by His own accord when love for Him develops in our heart. It is not necessary to entertain a desire even for seeing Him.

The original question was: "What should be done when the fellowship of an exalted soul is obtained?" Our reply to it is that we should seek their advice for our spiritual good and carry out their instructions. The joy which inheres in obeying them is even greater than the joy of Liberation; for final beatitude rolls at the feet of such exalted souls. There can be no communion between God and man without Satsaṅga and Mukti is out of question without such communion. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says:—

बिनु सतसंग न हरिकथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग।

"Except in the company of saints there is no talk of Śrī Hari, and one cannot be rid of error except through such talk."

(Talk bearing on the virtues, glory, truth and mysteries as well as on the name, personality, pastimes and Divine Abode of the Lord and even so the story of His greatness is included in talk of Śrī Hari.)

Therefore, Satsaṅga is the root of all. Hence we should never give up Satsaṅga; living in the company of saints, we should rather talk of God day and night. It is height of folly on our part if we spend even a minute in other pursuits, giving up talk of God. Talk of God is like nectar, while all other talk is like poison. People will

call him an unqualified fool who takes poison rejecting nectar. The sight, speech and thought of exalted souls, and conversation with them—all this is even more health-giving than nectar—or rather we may characterize it as all-sweet, all-blissful and full of love. Like the Cakora bird, which remains incessantly gazing at the full moon, let us also be looking at the face of an exalted soul—imbibing his nectarine words with the cup of our ears. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says:—

एक घड़ी आधी घड़ी आधी में पुनि आध।
तुलसी संगत साधु की कटै कोटि अपराध॥

“Fellowship with holy men, if it is had, say, for half an hour or quarter of an hour or even one-eighth of an hour, says Tulasīdāsa, is enough to wipe out millions of sins (committed in this or previous lives.)”

Our sins continue to be counteracted by their sight, speech and touch and conversation with them. The scriptures have exalted Satsaṅga even higher than the holy places. It is holy men alone who lend sanctity to holy places too. All the holy places in the world owe their sanctity to the contact of holy men, exalted souls or God Himself the highest of the holy. The holy well at Citrakūta in which the saintly prince Bharata deposited the waters of all the Tīrthas collected by him for the consecration of Lord Śrī Rāma before His coronation (to which of course He did not agree at that time) came to be known in the world by the name of Bharatakūpa and is looked upon as a most sacred spot even to this day. The hermitage of the sage Bharadvāja too, owes its sanctity to its being the abode of that holy sage. Nay, the abodes of all the sages that have flourished in this holy land and which are traceable now are reckoned among holy places. The

glory of saints is so great that every inch of space trodden by them is hallowed, nay, the very race in which they were born is consecrated. Says the scripture:—

कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन ।
अपारसंवित्सुखसागरेऽस्मिंल्लीनं परे ब्रह्मणि यस्य चेतः ॥

(Skanda Purāṇa, Māheśvara, Kaumāra. 15—140)

The earth gets hallowed by being trodden upon by a man whose mind has got merged in the transcendent Brahma, the boundless ocean of consciousness and bliss. His very race is sanctified by his sight and speech and by conversation with him. There is no wonder, then, if the mother who gave birth to him is redeemed.

Their noble behaviour towards their fellow-men, nay, their doing good to others are remarkable indeed. What is more important, however, is the fact that those who come in contact with them turn into Mahātmās. Not only this, through their company even a sinner is transformed into a saint.

It has been stated above that whereas one man lives on alms, another feeds beggars, the hungry and the disabled refusing to draw upon the stock himself. But can he who distributes food to others remain starving himself! If his resources are limited and he distributes all his food to others, not keeping back a single grain for himself, he may surely be reduced to starvation. But such large-hearted souls who are distressed over the suffering of others experience joy even in starving. King Rantideva had on one occasion to go without food for 48 days. The reason was he had given away whatever he had to afflicted, the forlorn and the ailing. That is why the scriptures have extolled him much, the self-abnegation of a man who gives away his own meal to another and chooses to go without food himself is of very great

moment indeed. In comparison to it a complete fast on an Ekādaśī (the eleventh day of a lunar fortnight) pales into insignificance.

There is a story in the Aśvamedha Parva of the Mahābhārata. In a certain land there lived an ascetic Brāhmaṇa. He maintained himself as well as his family with grains of corn gleaned from a market place (after the heaps of grain had been sold away or removed) or from a field after the harvest had been reaped. On one occasion he got nothing to eat for seven days. After a week he laid his hands on some barley. Frying and grinding it into flour he set about helping himself to it. Besides himself his family consisted of his wife, his adult son and his daughter-in-law. That very moment a newcomer, a Brāhmaṇa by caste chanced to call at his door. The Brāhmaṇa gave his own share to the newcomer, but the latter did not feel sated. Importuned by his wife, the Brāhmaṇa thereupon gave away her share too to the stranger. When this too, failed to satisfy him the host offered to the visitor his son's and afterwards his daughter-in-law's share as well. The guest now felt satiated and he introduced himself thus. He said, "I am Dharma (the god of piety) himself. I called at yours in the disguise of a Brāhmaṇa to test you. You have won me over." Instantly he remembered his aerial car which at once arrived there and mounting it all the four were translated to the Supreme Abode of the Lord. Such was the reward of relinquishing food for a day.

This refers to the gift of food. If God vouchsafed to anyone the power and privilege to deal out Mukti one can imagine how much more delighted he would feel in doing so than the one who distributes food.

King Janaka had taken upon himself the duty of freely

dispensing Mukti to whosoever in his capital sought for it. King Aśvapati was another ruler of the people who did so in his own kingdom. Even sages called on him to receive instruction in the science of the spirit from him and the king qualified them for final beatitude by instructing them in spiritual wisdom. Now tell me if anyone else can be quoted as his parallel. King Kīrtimān, who was a universal monarch, even excelled him. He was the undisputed monarch of the entire globe. He enabled the entire human population inhabiting this planet to achieve their goal by instructing them in Devotion. We must have existed in some sub-human state at that time. Had we tenanted a human body we too should have attained blessedness long long ago. God knows in what part of the globe we were living at that time and into which species of life we had stayed. We missed that golden opportunity although Kīrtimān adorned the earth for as many as ten thousand years. For ten thousand years as many mortal men as inhabited this globe continued to attain Liberation. Not one of them went to the abode of Yama, everyone of them ascended to the supreme abode of God. The story has been narrated at length in the Skandapurāṇa. Nevertheless we remained deprived of blessedness even during that period not yet we should; mind it and pray that all should attain blessedness. If we attain the blessed company of exalted souls who cherish such an altruistic feeling, we should have nothing more to accomplish. Living in the company of such blessed souls let us move about in the wide world dealing out mukti to all.

Even if we have to wander till there is a single soul left unredeemed in the world, we should not mind it; on the other hand it should be a matter of supreme joy for us.

The Divine Substance with Its Essential Character and Inwardness

The formless and transcendent aspect of God, which is a composite of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, is all knowledge, singular, non-dual, beyond the three Guṇas or modes of Prakṛti, ever free, actionless, immutable, unqualified, devoid of attributes and characteristics, absolute and pure (untainted by Māyā). That is the goal to be finally reached. In fact, it is neither an object of meditation nor of cognition (which is a faculty of the intellect). It is known to Itself and to no other. He who attains to that Supreme Spirit, which is a compact mass of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, forthwith becomes one with Him. He who knows the aforesaid Brahma knows It only after becoming one with It and not as apart from It. In fact, this too, is more than what one can say logically; it is only intended to enlighten strivers seeking illumination.

The other, viz., the Saṁguṇa aspect of God, should be understood as follows:—

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three modes of Prakṛti or primordial Matter. Prakṛti conceived along with these three Guṇas is an energy or potency of God and goes by the name of Māyā consisting of three Guṇas (Gītā VII.14); while God is the wielder of this potency, Śaktimān. This potency is both different from and identical with Him. This energy characterized by the aforesaid three Guṇas is insentient or devoid of consciousness, whereas God is All-consciousness. Viewed in this light, the

aforementioned energy is different from God. Again it is God Himself who is manifested in the form of that energy; looked at from this angle of vision, the divine energy is the same as God. It is this energy which is known by the name of Prakṛti. Being the offspring of Prakṛti, the three Guṇas are not different from it; even as ice is evolved out of water, and again melts into water, so do the three Guṇas arise from Prakṛti and then disappear into it. At the beginning of creation the Guṇas appear out of that Prakṛti (Gītā XIV. 5). Or, in other words, Prakṛti manifests itself in the form of the three Guṇas. In order to enable the Jīvas to work out their Karma, the latencies of which are stored in the form of Prakṛti, commotion is set up in Prakṛti as inspired by God. This disturbance or commotion splits up Prakṛti into two parts. One is called Vidyā and the other Avidyā. Vidyā is Sattvagūṇa, while Avidyā is Tamogūṇa and the commotion set up in Prakṛti is Rajogūṇa characterized by activity. At the time of final dissolution (Mahāpralaya) these three Guṇas disappear into Prakṛti. That is the equipoised state of Prakṛti. The state of Mahāpralaya is of the same duration as the period of creation. At the time of final dissolution all the Jīvas, the entire stock of their Karma in the form of latencies, the three Guṇas and this objective existence—the world of matter, a product of three Guṇas—all these remain merged in Brahma united with Prakṛti. At the end of final dissolution and the beginning of the ensuing round of creation commotion is set up once more in Prakṛti as inspired by God, in order to enable the Jīvas to work out their stock of Karma stored in the form of latencies. Thereby Prakṛti is split into three parts—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In this way rounds of creation and dissolution are

repeatedly brought into play on the bosom of God united with Prakṛti.

There are two aspects of this God united with Prakṛti: one is endowed with form and the other, devoid of form.

(1) The formless Divinity united with the three Guṇas is entirely beyond the realm of Avidyā (nescience), extremely pure (untainted by Māyā), ever free, all knowledge, absolute, fully present everywhere, self-effulgent, one without a second, fractionless, transcendent and benignant consisting of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss and rich in infinite and endless transcendental, divine and spiritual excellences like forgiveness, compassion, tranquillity, equanimity, contentment, guilelessness, wisdom etc. This Divinity pervades the whole universe in His formless state. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥

(IX. 4)

“The whole of this universe is permeated by Me in My formless aspect (just as ice is permeated through and through with water) and all beings exist in Me (resting as they do on My idea); while I, as a matter of fact, do not exist in them.”

It is this aspect of God that has been described in the Gītā in the following words under the name of the Supreme Divine Puruṣa:—

कविं पुराणमनुशासितारमणोरणीयांसमनुस्मरेद् यः ।
सर्वस्य धातारमचिन्त्यरूपमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥
प्रयाणकाले मनसाचलेन भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।
भुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक् स तं परंपुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥

(VIII. 9-10)

“Full of devotion, he who contemplates with a

steadfast mind even at the time of death on the All-Wise Ageless Being—the Ruler of all, subtler than the subtle, the Sustainer of all, inconceivable in character, refulgent like the sun and far beyond the darkness of ignorance—having by the power of Yoga firmly held the life-breath in the space between the two eyebrows, reaches without doubt that Supreme Divine Puruṣa.”

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।
यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ॥

(VIII. 22)

“Arjuna, that (eternal unmanifest) Supreme Puruṣa in whom all beings dwell, and by whom all this is pervaded, is attainable only through exclusive Devotion.”

(2) The aspect of God which is endowed with a personality rich in divine excellences is spiritual in substance. The Supreme Abode too of God is likewise divine and spiritual in character. The personality of devotees who ascend to that Supreme Abode is also spiritual. It is this God endowed with divine and spiritual excellences like forgiveness, compassion, love, even-mindedness, serenity, contentment, guilelessness, wisdom etc., who assumes His own Prakṛti (creative energy) and descends into the material plane in various divine forms such as Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Lord proclaims in the Gītā:—

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

(IV. 6)

“Though birthless and immortal in character, and the Ruler of all creation, I appear in bodily form through My own Yogamāyā (divine potency), presiding over My Prakṛti (creative energy).”

These Avatāra forms of Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and

others remain screened by the Lord's Māyā consisting of the three Guṇas to the unknowing. That is why such men, ignorant as they are of the reality of God, fail to realize the divinity of the Avatāra. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥

(VII. 5)

“Veiled as I am by My Yogamāyā (divine potency), I am not manifest to all. Hence such ignorant folk fail to recognize Me, the birthless and undecaying Supreme (i.e., look upon Me as subject to birth and death).”

But God draws aside that curtain of His Yogamāyā, consisting of the three Guṇas, before His loving and sincere devotee exclusively attached to Him. In this way through exclusive devotion the said devotee is enabled to behold the Lord in His reality and, knowing Him in essence, attains to Him.

The Lord says:—

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥

(Gītā XI. 54)

“Through single-minded devotion, of course, I can be seen in this form (with four arms), nay, known in essence and even entered into, O valiant Arjuna.”

To men of a demoniac disposition, however, who have no love for or faith in God, He remains hidden behind the veil of His Yogamāyā. Therefore, such foolish men of a demoniac disposition, ignorant as they are of God, disregard Him. The Lord says:—

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥

(Gītā IX. 11)

“Foolish men, not knowing My supreme state, think low of Me, the suzerain Lord of the entire creation, who have assumed a human semblance. (That is to say, they take Me, who have appeared in a human garb through My Yogamāyā for the deliverance of the world, to be an ordinary mortal).”

Exalted souls, however, that have attained illumination know the transcendent character of that Supreme Spirit, and those who know Him are freed from the shackles of mundane existence and attain to Him.

There is a vast difference between the virtues—such as forgiveness, compassion, love, tranquillity, equanimity, contentment, guilelessness, wisdom and dispassion—as found in men of a Sāttvika disposition and rich in divine endowment and enlightened and saintly personages living under the sun, on the one hand, and the transcendent divine virtues possessed by God, on the other. On the one hand, we see the real disc of a full moon appearing in the sky; while on the other, we behold an exact image of it as reflected in a mirror. The transcendent virtues possessed by God, united with Prakṛti correspond to the actual disc of the full moon and partake of the substance of God: whereas the Sāttvika qualities constituting what is called Vidyā (the light of wisdom), an offspring of Prakṛti are material in character. These latter are nothing but counterparts of the transcendent divine virtues of God as reflected in the pure heart of Sāttvika men endowed with a divine disposition and exalted souls possessed of wisdom.

The moral excellences characterizing striving souls, on the one hand, and those possessed by exalted souls who have attained the goal of their life, on the other, also differ. A striving soul of Sāttvika disposition and endowed

with divine traits recognizes the presence of such virtues in him; whereas an exalted and illumined soul who has transcended the three Guṇas is rid of his identification with the body and becomes one with God. Hence, even though such qualities do exist in the pure heart of those enlightened and exalted souls, there is none to own them inasmuch as, having transcended the three Guṇas, their conscious self or ego has become one with Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss combined.

Virtues such as forgiveness, compassion, love, wisdom, serenity, equanimity and contentment perceived by us in strivers and exalted souls are material though sublime, being objective in character. The excellences of God, on the other hand, which are part and parcel of God Himself, cannot be objectively cognized. Even great sages and gods fail to perceive them. His divine essence too, cannot likewise be known by others. The Lord Himself says:—

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।
अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥

(Gītā X. 2)

“Neither the hosts of gods nor the great sages know the secret of My birth (i.e., My appearance in human or other garb by way of mere sport); for I am the origin in all respects of gods as well as of the great seers.”

He alone knows Himself. Arjuna says to the Lord in the Gītā:—

स्वयमेवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।

(X. 15)

“You alone know what You are by Yourself, O Supreme Person!”

For, if the Divine essence were something that could be known by another, that too, would turn out to be material

like other knowable objects. God is beyond the ken of the intellect, hence none can know Him through the intellect. He, however, knows all. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।
भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन ॥

(VII. 26)

“Arjuna, I know all created beings, past as well as present, nay, even those that are yet to come; but no one (who is devoid of faith and reverence) knows Me.”

In the foregoing paragraphs we have discussed the absolute formless aspect of God, consisting of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, as well as the qualified (Saguṇa) aspect of God, both with form and without form. But this does not mean that there is a plurality of God. God has been dealt with in His heterogeneous character only from the point of view of different worshippers. Behind all these aspects, as a matter of fact, there exists the non-dual Supreme Spirit, the Integral Brahma, who is All-Knowledge, ever free, Absolute and Pure (untainted by Māyā), a composite of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

Therefore, in order to reach that Supreme Spirit man should cultivate exclusive devotion towards Him. Describing the marks of a devotee exclusively devoted to Him the Lord has thereby delineated in the following verse the nature of single-minded Devotion:—

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

(XI. 55)

“Arjuna, he who performs all his duties for My sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, has no attachment, and is free from malice towards all beings, attains to Me.”

□□

Transcendent Glory of Avatāras and Vicegerents of God

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥

(Gītā IV. 7)

The Lord says:—

“Arjuna, whenever righteousness is on the decline, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body Myself forth.”

This has led many a friend to address enquiries to me in the following strain:—If God descends on earth whenever righteousness is on the decline and the sinful tendency grows, why does He not do so in the present age when righteousness is at a particularly low ebb and sin is at a premium? For there are very few people in the world today who observe the principles of righteousness. Even if some rare individual does observe piety, he does so only partially; whereas sacrificial performances, austerities, pilgrimages, sacred observances, fasts, service to the distressed, respectful behaviour towards one's superiors, observance of purity and good conduct are rarely to be seen. And wherever they are seen, sifting enquiry would reveal that in some of these cases at least, hypocrisy stalks under the name of religion in the form of purity of body and right conduct. This much about the decline of righteousness. Apart from this, on the other hand, commission of sin is on the increase to an enormous degree. Theft, falsehood, deceit, dishonesty, bribery etc.,

are growing day by day. Black marketing, evading payment of income-tax and sales tax and maintaining false ledgers are now things of common practice. Many people do not regard these practices as sinful at all. Partaking of eggs and meat and drinking wine have been regarded as very great sins in our sacred books. But many people have started using them also. Some people take them in the name of medicine, others in hotels and still others for their aphrodisiac value and do not regard it as sinful. There are many who do not look upon adultery either as a sin. Some of them practise this vice secretly while others do it openly. Quite a number of people indulge in speculation, stock-jobbery and gambling—pursuits which the scriptures proclaim as most harmful for the country as well as for the nation. Cows are being slaughtered in very large numbers for the sake of beef and hide, because hides and dry beef are being exported in abundant quantities. Destruction of tiny creatures like mosquitoes, bugs, locusts etc., is not regarded as an act of violence at all by many people. The question is, why does God not descend into the world of matter under such circumstances?

In reply to it we can say only this much that God alone knows why He does not descend into this world at this juncture. We are not in a position to decide this question. All the same, by focussing our thought on this point we are led to conclude that God descends on earth only when the volume of sin increases to an excessive degree in any particular age. In the Satyayuga Dharma (Piety) stands on four legs; in the Tretā age their number is reduced to three; in Dvāpara age it is further reduced to two; while the same dwindles to one in Kaliyuga

(Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, Ad. 149). When Dharma began to decline in Satyayuga, God resuscitated it by appearing in the forms of Lord Nṛsiṃha and so on, and making short work of wicked persons like Hiraṇyakaśipu and others. At the close of Tretāyuga, when the demons heaped up piles of bones of seers and sages killed by them, God appeared in the form of Śrī Rāma and established Dharma by getting rid of Khara, Dūṣaṇa, Triśirā, Kumbhakarna, Meghanāda, Rāvaṇa and other demons, despatching some by His own hands and getting others killed through His deputies and lieutenants, for which act of His the world sings the glory of “Rāmarājya” (the reign of Rāma) even today. At the end of the Dvāpara age when wicked people began to perpetrate horrible acts of tyranny, God appeared in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and established righteousness by destroying evil-doers like Pūtana, Vatsa, Baka, Agha, Dhenuka, Pralamba, Ariṣṭa, Kaṁsa, Jarāsandha, Kālayavana, Śiśupāla, Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana, Śakuni and Jayadratha, disposing of some Himself and the rest through the agency of others and delivering the reins of government into the hands of the pious Emperor Yudhiṣṭhira.

From the above exposition it is concluded that when the volume of sin outgrows the limits prescribed for a particular Yuga, God generally descends into the world of matter at the close of the said Yuga. He was compelled to descend in our midst when there was a set-back in the observance of the four pillars of Dharma in Satyayuga, when there was a similar decline in the practice of the three pillars of virtue in Tretāyuga and when the practice of the two pillars of piety declined likewise even in the Dvāpara age. Now in this Kali age only one pillar of piety remains. When there is complete decadence even of this single virtue, God will appear in the

form of Kalki at the end of this Yuga—so says Śrīmad Bhāgavata (See XII. ii. 18).

Describing the Kaliyuga at its worst Gosvāmi Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

बरन	धर्म	नहिं	आश्रम	चारी ।
श्रुति	विरोध	रत	सब नर	नारी ॥
द्विज	श्रुति	बेचक	भूप	प्रजासन ।
कोउ	नहिं	मान	निगम	अनुसासन ॥
मारग	सोइ	जा	कहुँ	जोइ भावा ।
पंडित	सोइ	जो	गाल	बजावा ॥
मिथ्यारंभ		दंभ	रत	जोई ।
ता	कहुँ	संत	कहइ	सब कोई ॥
सोइ	सयान	जो	परधन	हारी ।
जो	कर	दंभ	सो	बड़ आचारी ॥
जो	कह	झूठ	मसखरी	जाना ।
कलिजुग	सोइ	गुनवंत		बखाना ॥
निराचार	जो	श्रुति	पथ	त्यागी ।
कलिजुग	सोइ	ग्यानी	सो	बिरागी ॥
जाकें	नख	अरु	जटा	बिसाला ।
सोइ	तापस	प्रसिद्ध		कलिकाला ॥
असुभ	बेष	भूषन	धरें	भच्छाभच्छ जे खाहिं ।
तेइ	जोगी	तेइ	सिद्ध	नर पूज्य ते कलिजुग माहिं ॥

“No one follows the duties of one’s own caste, and the four Āśramas or stages of life also disappear. Every man and woman takes delight in revolting against the Vedas. The Brāhmaṇas sell the Vedas; the kings bleed their subjects: no one respects the injunctions of the Vedas. The right course for every individual is that which one takes a fancy to; a man of erudition is he who plays the braggart. Whoever launches spurious undertakings and is given over to hypocrisy, him does everyone call a saint. He alone is clever, who robs another of his wealth; he

who puts up false appearances is an ardent follower of established usage. He who is given to lying and is clever at joking is spoken of as man of parts in the Kali age. He alone who is a reprobate and has abandoned the path of the Vedas is a man of wisdom and dispassion in the Kali age. He alone who has grown big nails and long locks of matted hair is a renowned ascetic in Kali age.

They alone who put on an unsightly garb and ornaments, eat anything and everything, no matter whether it is worth eating or not, are ascetics; they alone are perfect men and they are worth adoring in the Kali age.”

Such a spell of unrighteousness has already commenced even at present, although total decadence of virtue is not yet in sight.

Today hypocrisy and heresy are on the increase. Impostors entrap innocent men and women in the name of religion. Many women too, proclaim themselves as a sage, an exalted soul, a Yogī or embodiment of Divine Energy and their followers too, declare that she is the very personification of the Divine Energy, that God Himself has manifested Himself through her and appeared in the garb of a woman. Spreading such a misconception, the aforesaid women deify themselves for the sake of honour, exaltation and adoration and deprive people of their wealth and resources. At some places even householders and Saṁnyāsīs practise hypocrisy and imposture. Some call themselves a king of Yogīs, while others proclaim themselves as an enlightened and exalted soul. Some declare themselves to be a vicegerent of God, while others style themselves as an Avatāra. With such pretensions they get their feet and photographs worshipped, cause their name to be repeated and distribute the leaving from their dishes under

the name of 'Mahāprasāda' (food consecrated to a deity). Dusting the eyes of guileless men and women in this way, they violate the latters' chastity and rob them of their wealth and property. When this hypocrisy and imposture transcend all limits, nay, when righteousness is at a very low ebb and the volume of sin grows, God appears in our midst. To my mind the time for the Lord's descent into the world of matter has not yet arrived. If therefore, any impostor proclaims himself to be an Avatāra or a vicegerent of God, one should not sacrifice one's piety, wealth and property under his misguidance.

As a matter of fact, the substance, birth, purpose, glory, excellences, actions and disposition of an Avatāra of God are divine, transcendent and most singular. Their personality is spiritual in substance. Though resembling a human frame to all appearance, the body of an Avatāra is quite different from it. It is free from disease, grief, infatuation and imperfections and the transcendent and divine in character. He is not born like men. The Lord proclaims in the Gītā:—

“Though birthless and deathless, and the Lord of all beings, I manifest myself through My own Yogamāyā (divine potency), keeping My nature (Prakṛti) under control.”*

Hereby using the words 'अजोऽपि सन्' (though birthless) the Lord indicates that He only appears as being born but is not actually born.

In “Śrīmad Bhāgavatā” we are told the Lord appeared before mother Devakī in His four-armed form. Seeing that supramundane form of His, mother Devakī, in order that

* अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

her divine child might not be molested by Kāmsa, prayed to the Lord as follows:—

“Withdraw, O Soul of the universe that four-armed transcendent form adorned with the splendour of a conch, a discus, a mace and a lotus.”¹

Thereupon the Lord “instantly assumed the form of an ordinary babe”²

There the Lord said to Vasudeva and Devakī, “I have revealed this form before you in order to remind you of My previous descents. Had I not appeared in My Divine Form, My human semblance could not have enabled you to perceive My descent in that form.” Nay, then the Lord even urged Vasudeva to remove Him to Yaśodā’s. This proves that the Lord is not born. Further it has been shown there how by dint of His Yogic power the handcuffs and fetters of Vasudeva got loosened and the prison doors were unlocked and flung open, the warders were lulled into sleep, and how while Vasudeva was carrying Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Gokula the rising waters of the Yamunā abated and began to flow knee-deep, the river allowed passage to them and Yaśodā was overpowered by sleep. When, laying Śrī Kṛṣṇa on Yaśodā’s bed and picking up in exchange Yogamāyā (the Lord’s Divine Energy), who had already been born as a daughter of Yaśodā, Vasudeva returned to the prison, the prison doors got automatically closed and locked (Bhāgavata X.iii). All this represented the glory of God alone. Such powers do not exist in men.

By using the phrase ‘अव्ययात्मा अपि सन्’ the Lord reveals that though appearing to die, He does not actually perish

1. उपसंहर विश्वात्मन्नदो रूपमलौकिकम् । शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मश्रिया जुष्टं चतुर्भुजम् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X.iii. 30)

2. पित्रोः सम्पश्यतोः सद्यो बभूव प्राकृतः शिशुः ।

(latter half of Bhāgavata X.iii. 30)

inasmuch as His personality knows no decay, is imperishable. When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa ascended to His Supreme Abode, He did so in His embodied form. In Śrīmad Bhāgavata we read:—

“The Lord rose to His own (Divine) Abode without consuming, by concentration through Yoga (as Yogīs do) on the element of fire, His own (divine) Person, the charming support of (all) the worlds and the happy object for concentration and meditation.*

We read in discourse XI of Śrīmad Bhāgavata how in compliance with Arjuna’s prayer the Lord showed him His cosmic form and again withdrew it at the former’s supplication. The Cosmic form was neither born nor did it perish; rather it appeared and disappeared. Hence the Lord becomes manifest when He descends into the world of matter, and again disappears.

So did the Lord bless Dhruva with His sight by appearing before him in His four-armed form and then vanished (Bhāgavata IV.ix.).

Even so during His descent as Śrī Rāma the Lord appeared in His four-armed form before mother Kausalyā and then bodily ascended to His Supreme Abode. We read in Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa:—

पितामहवचः श्रुत्वा विनिश्चत्य महामतिः ।
विवेश वैष्णवं तेजः सशरीरः सहानुजः ॥

Hearing the words of Brahmā (the progenitor of the entire creation), the omniscient Śrī Rāma finally made up His mind and along with His (three) younger brothers (Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna) bodily returned to Vaikuṇṭha (the all-effulgent Abode of Viṣṇu).”

* लोकाभिरामं स्वतनुं धारणाध्यानमङ्गलम् । योगधारणयाऽऽग्नेय्यादग्ध्वा धामाविशत् स्वयम् ॥

Therefore, it should be concluded that the (divine) personality of God is imperishable; it knows no decay.

The Lord's intention in using the phrase 'भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्' is that in spite of His being the Ruler of all creation the Lord only looks like a human being. In fact, however, He is not a man. During the period of His sojourn on the earth the Lord has exhibited His divinity on many an occasion. When Brahmā was seized with a doubt as to whether Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a mortal or God Himself, he stole away Śrī Kṛṣṇa's calves and cowherd companions in order to test His divinity. Appearing in the form of those calves and cowherd boys Himself the Lord assumed many forms. Later on, when Brahmā was rid of his infatuation, He even withdrew all those forms (Bhāg., X.Xiii).

While escorting Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā, Akrūra entered a pool in the Yamunā river to take a plunge in it. There the Lord revealed Himself to him under water and showed the same form to him in the chariot as well when he returned to it (Bhāg., X.xxxxix).

During His descent as Śrī Rāma too, the Lord assumed numerous forms. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa in His 'Rāmacaritamānasa'—

"He forthwith appeared in countless forms and in this way the gracious Lord met everybody in an appropriate manner. The Hero of Raghu's line rid all men and women of their agony by casting His benign look on them. In a moment the Lord greeted them all; Umā, this was a mystery which none could comprehend."*

* अमित रूप प्रगटे तेहि काला । जथा जोग मिले सबहि कृपाला ॥
कृपादृष्टि रघुबीर बिलोकी । किए सकल नर नारि बिसोकी ॥
छन महिं सबहिं मिले भगवाना । उमा मरम यह काहुँ न जाना ॥

These miracles are beyond human capacity. They can be wrought by God alone, and by none else.

प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

The half-verse quoted above reveals the speciality about the Lord's birth. We are born in the world as a result of our virtues and sins subject to the control of Prakṛti, while God appears in our midst keeping Prakṛti under His control. His birth is marked by freedom, while ours is characterized by bondage. Prakṛti obeys His will, whereas we remain under the sway of Prakṛti. His personality is divine, spiritual, transcendent, devoid of sins and vices and free from worry, grief, senility, death and disease; whereas our body is material and subject to the above-mentioned drawbacks. His descent into the world of matter is intended to redeem the world through the propagation of righteousness, spiritual wisdom, love, morality, piety and devotion; whereas we are born to work out our destiny. Hence there is a world of difference between His birth and ours. His birth, actions and aims too, are transcendental. The Lord Himself says:—

“Arjuna, My birth and activities are divine. He who knows this in reality is never reborn on leaving his body, but comes to Me.”*

The divine character of the Lord's birth has been indicated above. Now we proceed to discuss the divinity of His actions. The Lord's actions are entirely free from the sense of doership, self-interest, desire, attachment, the feeling of mineness etc. They are absolutely blemishless and solely designed for the good of the world. The Lord Himself says in the Gītā:—

* जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

“The four orders of society (viz., the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra) were created by Me classifying them according to the mode of Prakṛti predominant in each and apportioning corresponding duties to them; though the author of this creation, know Me, the immortal Lord, to be a non-doer.

“Since I have no craving for the fruit of actions, actions do not contaminate Me. Even he who thus knows Me in reality is not bound by actions.”¹

The Lord’s actions are exemplary too and are solely intended to instruct the world. He is extremely tender and guileless by nature. He is full of divine virtues such as forgiveness, compassion, tranquillity, even-mindedness, contentment, guilelessness, wisdom, dispassion, love etc. Despite His being such an exalted personage, He regards the rights of His devotees as equal to His Own. Even if a petty man dedicates himself as well as his all to the Lord, He too, surrenders Himself and all (that belongs to Him) to the former. If even an insignificant person seeks and remembers God, He too seeks and remembers him in the same way:—

“Arjuna, howsoever men seek Me, even so do I approach them; for all men follow My path in every way.”²

Such is the divine character of the Lord’s actions. Even he who comes to know in reality the divine character

1. चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।
 तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥
 न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।
 इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते ॥

(Gītā, IV. 13-14)

2. ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
 मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

of the Lord's actions attains blessedness. What wonder, then, that one should attain final beatitude through obedience to His commands and by walking in His footsteps!

Now tell me, what man is there in the world, who can behave in the aforesaid way as the Lord does? There are many who persuade others to recognize them as God Himself but they hardly exhibit any one characteristic of God. Therefore, everyone should beware of, and remain at a respectable distance from those who persuade others to acknowledge them as a manifestation of God.

Similarly, the birth and actions of vicegerents of God too, are transcendent. They are souls who stood liberated even before their birth. They come down from the supreme Abode of the Lord for the good of the world, carrying God's own delegated authority with them. They have no trace of vice or misconduct in them and their body too, is free from disease. We find no mention in our sacred books of any of the Avatāras or vicegerents of God that have walked on the earth having ever fallen ill; for disease is an outcome of sin, whereas the Lord or His vicegerents are ever pure and the very embodiment of wisdom. These supermen come down to the terrestrial region for the good of the world carrying with them the authority of God; that is why they are spoken of as vicegerents of God. The characteristics of devotees mentioned in verses 13 to 19 of Discourse XII of the Gītā are already found to exist in them. For example, the sage Vedavyāsa was such a vicegerent of God. He wielded miraculous powers. As soon as he saw the light he enhanced the size of his body by his own will and acquired the knowledge of the Vedas along with the six

Vedāṅgas (branches of knowledge auxiliary to the Vedas) and the Itihāsas by himself (Mahā., Ādi. IX. 3) Śrī Vedavyāsa used to be present without being invited wherever he deemed it imperative to do so. He revealed himself to King Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas before they repaired to the city of Ekacakrā and appeared once more during their sojourn in that city when they were intending to leave that place, and narrated to them the story of Draupadī's previous life (Mahā., Ādi., CLIV, CLX VIII). Similarly, appearing at King Drupada's court in the capital of the Pāñcālas, he told him as well the story of the past incarnation of Draupadī and, blessing him with divine vision, revealed to him the Pāṇḍavas in their reality as endowed with their former celestial forms (Mahā. Ādi., CXCVI).

Nay, in the Āśramavāsikaparva of the Mahābhārata we are told how the sage Vedavyāsa appeared before King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, his wife, Gāndhārī, and Kuntī, the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, and how, when Gāndhārī and Kuntī expressed their desire to see their deceased sons and other relations, Śrī Vedavyāsa invoked the presence of the entire army, consisting of eighteen Akṣauhiṇīs, as many as sixteen years after its destruction. He detained them overnight and allowed them to meet all their people in an appropriate manner and sent them back the next morning. The form, features, age, attire, ensigns and mounts of all these warriors, who had died sixteen years before, were just the same as before (Mahā., Āśrama., XXXII). Similarly, at the request of King Janamejaya the sage Vedavyāsa summoned the spirit of the latter's departed father, Emperor Parīkṣit, at his sacrificial performance in the same form and age as he had before his demise (Mahā.,

Āśrama., XXXV). How strange it was! Can any human being accomplish such a feat? Many people seek to be recognized as a vicegerent of God, but they hardly possess a single characteristic of such vicegerents of God. In order to win others' homage, impostors deceive others by declaring themselves to be God Himself or a vicegerent of God. Therefore, one should keep at a respectable distance from and never fall in the clutches of those who proclaim themselves to be an Avatāra or vicegerent of God or even an enlightened and exalted soul. For, in the present age, there is neither any Avatāra nor any vicegerent of God deputed by Him with His own authority. Had there been any, the setback in righteousness and growth of impiety witnessed in the present times would not have been possible. For a man could attain blessedness even by looking on, speaking to, directing one's thoughts to and cultivating the fellowship of the Lord and His vicegerents. What wonder, then, that one should attain final beatitude through service to them and by obeying their commands and following their example?

These days it is difficult to come in contact even with exalted souls like Emperor Yudhiṣṭhira through whose sight and speech great sinners like Nahuṣa etc., were rid of their sins and ascended to heaven (Mahā., Vana., CLXXXI). Nay, King Yudhiṣṭhira wielded extraordinary powers. He was a permanent abode of virtues like truthfulness, forbearance, munificence, extreme composure, unshakable forgiveness, modesty, splendour, fame, highest glory, kindness, artlessness etc. The people of the land where he sojourned became religious-minded. Wealth, foodgrains, the bovine race, piety and morality flourished in that land. Thanks to King Yudhiṣṭhira's presence there were timely

showers, the fields remained ever green and full of crops and righteousness gained popularity. Nay, the people of that land turned munificent, generous, polite, modest, chary of speech, truthful, given to noble pursuits and self-controlled, fearless, contented, sinless, robust and healthy, dextrous and free from morbidities such as vanity, malice and jealousy. The Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas there performed sacrifices, practised austerities and charity, studied the Vedas and so on according to their respective codes of morality. Everyone followed one's own allotted duty (Mahā., Virāṭa, XXVIII).

It is easy to declare oneself as a compeer of Yudhiṣṭhira: but it is not a joke to vie with him. Yudhiṣṭhira was a man of piety of a very high order. He faced grave crises but never abandoned his duty. Therefore we too, should walk in his footsteps in order to become a man of piety like him.

The marks of a God-realized devotee depicted in verses 13 to 19 of Discourse XII of the Gītā and those of an enlightened soul who has transcended the three Guṇas, as delineated in verses 22 to 25 of Discourse XIV, appear in men who having been born in this world in a human garb as a result of their meritorious and sinful deeds attain Liberation in this very life by following a particular course of spiritual discipline. But their bodies are never free from disease, nor do they develop superhuman and transcendent powers similar to those possessed by an Avatāra or vicegerent of God, enabling them to appear anywhere and everywhere at will and summon the spirits of departed souls and bring them face to face with living men and so on. Of course, subsequent to their attaining Liberation their actions and disposition etc., get sublimated,

so that men can be redeemed by cultivating their fellowship, holding conversation with them, obeying their commands, rendering them service and following their example in a disinterested spirit. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

‘Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service, and question them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge.’¹

“Not knowing thus, other dull-witted persons, however, worship just as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing, are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.”²

Following the advice contained in the above-quoted words of the Lord we should derive special benefit from God-realized devotees and saintly men of wisdom by cultivating their fellowship, holding conversation with them, obeying their commands, rendering service to them and walking in their footsteps with reverence and devotion.

□□

1. तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया । उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

(IV. 34)

2. अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते । तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(XIII. 25)

Secret of the Formless Divine Essence

The Lord says in the opening verse of Discourse IX of Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā:—

“To you, who are devoid of the carping spirit, I shall now unfold the most secret knowledge of Nirguṇa Brahma along with the knowledge of manifest Divinity, knowing which you shall be free from the evil of worldly existence.”*

Thus undertaking to unfold the most esoteric knowledge of the unqualified Brahma along with that of the manifest Divinity, the Lord proceeds to glorify it by adding the following eight qualifications to it. He says:—

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥

(IX. 2)

“This knowledge (of both the Nirguṇa and Saguṇa aspect of God) is a sovereign science, a sovereign secret, (supremely) holy, excellent, directly perceptible, attended with virtue, very easy to practise and imperishable.”

It may be asked here why people in general do not pursue this knowledge, even though it is so profitable and easy to attain. Our reply to this question is that lack of faith is responsible for their indifference to this knowledge.

The Lord says:—

अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥

(IX. 3)

* इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥

“Arjuna, people having no faith in this Dharma fail to reach Me and revolve in the path of the world of death.”

The Lord has inculcated in the Gītā worship of all the varying aspects of God—the one endowed with form as well as the formless, the qualified as well as the unqualified.

Describing the truth and inwardness of His formless aspect the Lord says:—

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥
न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।
भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥

(IX. 4-5)

“The whole of this universe is permeated by Me as the unmanifest Divinity, and all beings rest on the idea within Me. Therefore, really speaking, I am not present in them.

“Nay, all those beings do not dwell in Me; but behold the wonderful power of my Divine Yoga; though the Sustainer and Creator of beings, My Self in reality does not dwell in those beings.”

The purport is that God not only pervades this universe but is at the same time its supreme support, nay, its material and efficient Cause in one*. In the first half of verse 4 above the Lord points out His all-pervasive character. By declaring that all created beings dwell in

* The stuff of which a thing is made is its material cause, while he who makes it is its efficient cause; For example, clay is the material cause and the potter, the efficient cause of an earthen jar. In the case of the universe, of course, God is both its material and efficient Cause. Just as a spider is both the material and efficient cause of the network produced by it, so is God the material as well as the efficient Cause of the universe and is identical with it.

Him and that He is the sustainer of all living beings, He proclaims Himself to be the supreme support of the universe. Nay, by asking Arjuna to behold His divine and marvellous power of creation He gives us to understand that He is the efficient Cause of the universe; and by pointing out that His very being is the Creator of living beings He declares Himself to be the material Cause of the universe.

The following illustration will explain His threefold character noted above. God pervades the universe and He is its support and material cause too in the same way as the sky permeates a mass of clouds and is its support and material cause. No fraction of a cloud exists without the sky; similarly no part of the animate or inanimate creation exists apart from God. He fills all space, exists at all times and interpenetrates all objects. The Śruti says:—

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत्।

“Whatever exists in the world—whether animate or inanimate—is permeated by God.”

Just as the sky is the supreme support of clouds—no cloud can exist without the sky—even so God is the supreme support of the universe, the world cannot exist without God. And just as clouds evolve from the sky, so has the world sprung from the thought of God. The Śruti says:—

सोऽकामयत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

(Taittirīya., II. 6)

“He willed that He should multiply and reproduce Himself.”

It is one's thought in the dream state that takes the form of the dream-world. Hence the latter is identical with the dreaming man. The dreamer alone is its material as

well as efficient cause; for no other factor is present there, the man is all that exists. Even so God is the material as well as the efficient Cause of the universe. The only difference is that while the Jīva is dependent and in the grip of ignorance, God is independent and wisdom itself.

One may argue here that one can understand the Lord's assertion that He pervades the universe and that the latter exists in Him; but one cannot reconcile oneself with His pronouncement that he is not in the world nor does the world exist in Him; for this involves a contradiction in terms. The Lord introduces His remarks with the following words:—

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।

“All this universe stands pervaded by Me in My unmanifest aspect,”

And immediately afterwards He says:—

.....न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः न च भूतस्थः ।.....

“I am not present in those beings.” “My Self does not dwell in those beings.”

Again, while in verse 4 above He says मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि— (All created beings are present in Me), He follows His remark with the words—न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि—(these beings are not present in me). These two pronouncements are apparently contradictory. Hence which of them should be believed as true? Our reply to the contention is that the two statements are not contradictory. Hence both of them are correct. We should try to understand their true significance.

Reverting to the example quoted above the sky both exists and does not exist in clouds. It was there even when the clouds did not exist; it persists even when the clouds no longer exist and it exists in the clouds even during

the intervening period. That is to say, the sky is ever present in itself before the appearance and after the disappearance of the cloud as well as during the intervening period, when the cloud is there. Clouds come into existence and then cease to exist; but the sky is uniformly present in its immutable state. As a matter of fact, the sky is present in itself even when the cloud is there; but in order to bring home the truth it is affirmed that the sky permeates the clouds. Hence both the statements, viz., that the sky permeates the clouds and that it does not exist in the clouds are equally logical. Hence there is no contradiction between them. Similarly God both indwells and does not indwell the universe. God was present there even when the universe did not exist; He persists even when the world ceases to be and He indwells the universe during the intervening period too. That is to say, God ever exists in His own being at the beginning and end of creation as well as in the middle. The cosmos appears and then disappears. Hence it is but reasonable to assert that God indwells the universe, when the world presents itself to our view. As a matter of fact, God exists in His own being even when the world is there; but in order to bring home the truth it is stated that God pervades the universe.

Had the sky existed in the clouds, the part of the sky comprised in the cloud should have been dissolved with the dissolution of the cloud. But no part of the sky disappears even when the cloud is no more. Hence it is but reasonable to say that the sky does not exist in the clouds, but that it exists in its own being.

Similarly, if God really existed in the universe, the part of God comprised in the universe should have

disappeared with the dissolution of the universe. But God does not perish even when the universe is no more. Hence it is but reasonable to assert that God does not indwell the universe, but that He is ever present in His own being. For, like a mass of clouds appearing in the sky and then disappearing, the universe comes into being and then disappears; while God ever uniformly exists in His eternal, immovable and immutable state.

Again, when there is a cloud in the sky, it is but reasonable to assert that a cloud exists in a part of the sky. Similarly, when the sky is cloudless, we are quite justified in saying that there is no cloud in the sky. But even when the sky is covered with clouds, the latter do not really exist in the sky; for they appear in the sky and then disappear. Had the clouds really existed, they would have persisted for ever. A thing which does not last eternally is transitory; hence it is not unreasonable to speak of it as non-existent.

Similarly, when this universe presents itself to our view, we are justified in saying—just in order to bring home the truth—that the world exists in a part of God; and we are equally justified in saying—when the world is no more, i.e., after the final dissolution—that the world no longer exists in God. As a matter of fact, however, the universe does not exist in God even when it is there; for the world comes into existence in God and it is ever in the process of destruction. Had the world really existed, it would have lasted for ever. That which is not everlasting is transitory. Hence it is but reasonable to speak of a transient substance, which exists at a particular time and ceases to exist at another, as a nonentity. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

(II. 16)

“The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be: the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of truth.”

The long and short of it is that God—who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss concentrated—pervades this universe; and He alone is its material as well as efficient Cause. Being a projection of His thought, it is the same as God. Hence continuing to recognize this world as a replica of God—this is what constitutes His worship. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(VII. 19)

“In the very last of all births the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God. Such a great soul is very rare.”

□□

Self-denial, Self-control and Dispassion

The following three recipes are exceedingly helpful towards God-realization:

1. To restrain the senses and the mind from their respective objects, that is, to sever their connection with them.

2. To bring the senses and the mind under one's control.

3. To develop a strong repulsion towards the world, consisting of objects of the senses and the mind.

Of these three expedients, to bring the senses and the mind under one's control is more useful than to wean the senses and the mind from their objects. For, without subjugating the mind the accomplishment of Yoga in the form of God-realization is not possible. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।
वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥

(VI. 36)

“Yoga is difficult of achievement for one whose mind has not been subdued; by him, however, who has his mind under control, and is (ceaselessly) striving (for it), it can be easily attained through effort. Such is My conviction.”

Control of the mind includes control of the senses as well, because the Lord has advised Arjuna in verses 41 and 43 of Discourse III of the Gītā to subdue the mind after the senses have been brought under control.

To develop a distaste for the world of senses is even better than controlling the mind and the senses. It is Vairāgya that enables one to subdue the mind (Gītā VI. 35). When the mind itself can be brought under control by dint of Vairāgya, it is much easier to tame the senses thereby. And through Vairāgya, again, the mind and the senses too can be weaned from their objects.

Without dispassion none can achieve perfection in Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, the Yoga of eight limbs, Jñānayoga or any other discipline. It is through Vairāgya alone that success can be achieved in all these spiritual disciplines; for it is Vairāgya alone that plays a prominent part in the domain of spiritual discipline.

The Lord declares in the Gītā that Karmayoga can be accomplished through dispassion or absence of attachment alone:—

यदा हि नेन्द्रियार्थेषु न कर्मस्वनुषज्जते ।
सर्वसंकल्पसंन्यासी योगारूढस्तदोच्यते ॥

(VI. 4)

“When a man ceases to have any attachment for the objects of senses or for actions, and has renounced all thoughts of the world, he is said to have climbed to the heights of Yoga.”

Even so, for the discipline of devotion too the Lord stresses the necessity of dispassion in the shape of absence of attachment—

अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलमसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ।

(Second half of XV. 3)

“Felling down this Peepal tree, which has its roots firmly fixed (in the shape of I-ness and my-ness and latent desires), with the formidable axe of dispassion (a man should diligently seek after that supreme state, viz., God).”

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषाः ।

(Gītā XV. 5)

“Those wise men who are free from pride and infatuation, and have conquered the evil of attachment (reach that supreme immortal state).”

मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।

(Gītā XI. 55)

“He who is devoted to Me and has no attachment (reaches Me).”

For, he who is treading the path of devotion cannot achieve God-realization without exclusive love for God. If he still cherishes a feeling of mineness or attachment with regard to anything else, that is no devotion but a stigma on devotion.

Similarly, the Yoga of eight limbs too, is accomplished through dispassion alone, Yoga is only another name for full control over the operations of the mind—

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ।

(Yoga-Darśana I. 2)

The great sage Patañjali has recommended the following means for controlling such operations of the mind—

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ।

(Ibid.I. 12)

“The operations of the mind can be controlled through repeated effort and dispassion.”

Therefore in Yoga as well, consisting as it does of absolute control over the operations of the mind, dispassion plays the principal part. And Śrī Patañjali says later on:—

तीव्रसंवेगानामासन्नः ।

(Ibid., 1.21)

Nirbīja Samādhi (complete absorption into the Universal

Spirit without the least and remotest chance of ever being disunited from It) comes within easy reach of those who pursue their Yogic practice and develop a distaste for the world with rapid strides.

Keen dispassion alone accelerated one's speed in spiritual practice and keen dispassion alone has been referred to under the name of "Para Vairāgya" (Vairāgya *par excellence*).

तत्परं पुरुषख्यातेर्गुणवैतृष्यम् ।

(Ibid., I. 16)

"Complete absence of thirst for material phenomena from the consciousness of a soul—that is Para Vairāgya."

This leads to the speedy attainment of illumination.

In the same way Vairāgya plays a prominent part in attaining perfection in the discipline of knowledge. While describing the highest consummation of Jñānayoga (the discipline of knowledge), the Lord enjoins Arjuna chiefly to remain ever devoted to the practice of meditation and take a firm stand on dispassion—

ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ।

(Second half of Gītā XVIII. 52)

And dispassion finds repeated mention even among the twenty steps to Jñāna enumerated in verses 7 to 11 of Discourse XIII of the Gītā:—

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।

जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।

(Gītā XIII. 8 & 1st half of verse 9)

"A distaste for the objects of enjoyment of this world and the next, and also absence of egotism, musing again and again on the pain and evils inherent in birth, death,

old age and disease, and absence of attachment and the feeling of meum with respect to son, wife, home etc. (all these are the steps to knowledge).”

This goes to prove that dispassion alone occupies the foremost place among the following three—(1) weaning the senses and the mind from their objects. (2) control of the mind and the senses and (3) strong aversion to the pleasures of the world.

It is noticed also that whenever there is dispassion in the mind spiritual practice automatically picks up speed and the senses as well as the mind naturally withdraw from worldly objects and get devoted to God without any effort; whereas without dispassion the mind of a striver finds it difficult to get focussed on God even with effort and if it does it refuses to stick. Therefore, without dispassion any spiritual discipline aiming at God-realization is difficult to succeed.

And even when the mind and the senses have been weaned from their objects the state of a Sthitaprajña (or a person of stabilized intellect) cannot be attained without dispassion. The Lord says:—

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

(Gītā II. 59)

“Pleasures of sense keep aloof from him who does not enjoy them with his senses; but the taste for them persists. This relish also disappears in the case of the man of stable mind when he sees the Supreme.”

If a man has no aversion to the pleasures of the world even after his senses and mind have been controlled, blessedness is not within easy reach of such a man. In

Section III of Yoga-Darśana, known by the name of Vibhūtipāda, it is stated:—

त्रयमेकत्र संयमः ।

(Ibid., III. 4)

“Samyama is the collective name for Dhāraṇā (concentration) and Dhyāna (meditation) on and Samādhi (complete absorption) into the thought of an object.”

But these three can never be accomplished until and unless the senses and the mind have been brought under control. And it is through this Samyama that all kinds of Siddhis (mystic powers) can be acquired. All these Siddhis, however, are hurdles on the way to Self-redemption. Therefore, it is only on developing an aversion to these that a man can cross the ocean of worldly existence—

तद्वैराग्यादपि

दोषबीजक्षये

कैवल्यम् ।

(Yoga-Darśana III. 50)

“On the seed of evil being destroyed through aversion even for these (Siddhis), final beatitude (Kaivalya) is attained.”

All this goes to prove that dispassion is superior even to the subjugation of the senses and the mind.

Dispassion: From the absence of attachment automatically follows absence of aversion too. For, where there is no attachment aversion is out of the question. It is the feeling of attachment one conceives for an agreeable object that gives rise to the feeling of aversion for something repugnant. While enumerating the five Kleśas or sources of affliction the great sage Patañjali has mentioned aversion (Dveṣa) immediately after attachment (Rāga)—

अविद्यास्मितारागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाः

क्लेशाः ।

(Yoga-Darśana II. 3)

“Nescience, Egotism (identification of the Spirit with matter), Attachment, Aversion and Fear of Death are the Kleśas (sources of affliction).”

अविद्या क्षेत्रमुत्तरेषाम् ।

(Yoga-Darśana II. 4)

“Nescience is the root of the other four afflictions (Egotism etc.) mentioned after it.”

Therefore, the disappearance of nescience involves the eradicating of the following four as well—egotism, attachment, aversion and fear of death. On the same ground it can be safely asserted that the disappearance of Rāga automatically leads to the disappearance of aversion and fear of death too.

Hence we find it declared in the Gītā that the disappearance of attachment alone brings about God-realization.

The Lord says to Arjuna:—

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

(Gītā III. 19)

“Therefore, incessantly go on doing your duty efficiently without attachment. Doing work without attachment, man attains the supreme.”

A striver treading the path of action can be redeemed in case he is free from likes and dislikes and provided his mind and senses are under control, even though the latter continue to be in contact with their objects.

The Lord says:—

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।
 आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥
 प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।
 प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥

(Gītā II. 64-65)

“But the self-controlled striver, while enjoying the various objects of senses through his senses, which are disciplined and free from likes and dislikes, attains placidity of mind. With the attainment of such placidity of mind, all his sorrows come to an end; and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind, (soon withdrawing itself from all sides) gets firmly stabilized (in God).”

Similarly, in the case of a striver pursuing the discipline of Devotion blessedness can be attained even while performing actions with the mind and senses, when one has taken shelter under the feet of the Lord—

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
 मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 56)

Even so a striver pursuing the path of Knowledge realizes God even though moving with his mind and senses in the midst of objects of enjoyment.

The Lord says:—

नैव किञ्चित्करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।
 पश्यञ्शृण्वन्स्पृशज्जिघ्रन्शननाच्छन्स्वपञ्श्वसन् ॥
 प्रलपन्विसृजन्गृह्णन्निमिषन्निमिषन्पि ।
 इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥

“The follower of Sāṅkhyayoga, however, who knows the reality of things must believe—even while seeing or hearing, touching or smelling, eating or drinking, walking or lying asleep, breathing or speaking, answering the calls

of nature or grasping, and opening or closing the eyes—that he does nothing that recognizing it is the senses that are moving among their objects.”

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥

(Gītā XIV. 19)

“When the seer perceives no agent other than the three Guṇas and realizes Me, the Supreme Spirit, standing entirely beyond these Guṇas, he enters into My being.”

Nonetheless the striver would do well not to allow the mind and the senses to come into contact with their objects. For, on coming into contact with their objects, the senses forcibly carry away a man’s mind. Later on the mind and the senses combine to deprive him of his judgment and thereby bring about his downfall.

The Lord says:—

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥

(Gītā II. 60)

“Outrageous by nature, the senses even of a wise man, who is practising self-control, forcibly carry away his mind, O Arjuna.”

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि ॥

(Gītā II. 67)

“As the wind carries away a bark upon the waters, even so of the senses moving among their objects, the one to which the mind is joined takes away his judgment.”

Hence a striver should ever be on his guard not to allow his senses to come into contact with their objects. For, the senses cloud the mind even of a wise man and attract him towards their objects.

Śrī Manu says:—

मात्रा स्वस्त्रा दुहित्रा वा न विविक्तासनो भवेत्।
बलवानिन्द्रियग्रामो विद्वांसमपि कर्षति ॥

(Manu., II. 251)

“A man should not sit apart even with his mother, sister, or daughter; for the powerful senses drag even a learned man towards the objects of enjoyment.”

It is a matter of common experience that on coming across a pretty young woman a man begins to gaze at her and his mind puts him off the scent, suggesting to him that he would incur no sin by simply looking at her. But as he looks at her intently more than once his mind begins to take delight in the act. Then, conceiving a passion for her, he degrades himself into sin. Similarly, on our obtaining sweet and delicious articles of confectionery, dry fruits and fruits etc., the mind deceives us by suggesting that there is no harm in partaking of them. But the enjoyment creates a taste for them and gives them a delightful colour and in this way one gets attached to them. The same thing holds good in the case of objects of the other senses as well; and the striver should always beware of coming into contact with the objects of senses.

The Lord says in the Gītā:—

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

(Gītā. II. 68)

“Therefore, O Arjuna, he whose senses stand completely weaned from their objects, is said to have a stable mind.”

Even dwelling on the senses with the mind alone is the root of all evils:—

ध्यायतो	विषयान्पुंसः	सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्सञ्जायते	कामः	कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
क्रोधाद्भवति	सम्मोहः	सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्	बुद्धिनाशो	बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gītā II. 62-63)

“The man dwelling on the objects of senses develops attachment for them; from attachment springs up desire, and from desire (unfulfilled) follows anger. From anger arises infatuation; from infatuation, confusion of memory; from confusion of memory, loss of reason; and from loss of reason one goes to complete ruin.”

Therefore, a striver should give his senses the least chance of coming into contact with their objects. Whenever such contact is necessary, it should be made only after bringing the mind and the senses under control and ridding oneself of likes and dislikes or taking shelter with the Lord or recognizing the true nature of God. This is the way to blessedness.

□□

Redemption through Self-control

Through control of the mind, the intellect, the vital airs, the senses and the body a man can conquer this world and the next and can also achieve the highest good. Therefore, self-restraint is supremely beneficial to all, no matter whether one is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Zoroastrian, a Sikh, a Jew or anything else. Perfection in every kind of Yoga or course of spiritual discipline—be it Jñānayoga (the Path of Knowledge), Karmayoga (the Path of Action), Bhaktiyoga (The Path of Devotion) or Dhyānayoga (the Path of Meditation) can be achieved only through control of the mind, intellect, sense and body. Even one's health cannot be maintained without self-restraint. Putting restraint on all these a man can achieve his highest good even while following the path of Action. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

(II. 61)

“Therefore, having controlled them all and collecting his mind, one should sit for meditation, devoting oneself heart and soul to Me. For he, whose senses are mastered, is known to have a stable mind.”

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु	विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।	
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा	प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥	
प्रसादे	सर्वदुःखानां	हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो	ह्याशु	बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥

(II. 64-65)

“But the self-controlled striver, while enjoying the various sense-objects through his senses, which are disciplined and free from likes and dislikes, attains placidity of mind. With the attainment of such placidity of mind all his sorrows come to an end; and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind, soon withdrawing itself from all sides, becomes firmly established in God.”

In the present age, however, due to lack of self-restraint, the very existence of humanity is in jeopardy, the attainment of God-realization being a far cry. There being no place for self-restraint in the curricula of the modern schools and colleges, indiscipline is growing among the students—a phenomenon which is fraught with fearful consequences. Due to lack of self-restraint wantonness is on the increase among boys and girls, the evil consequences of which are apparent. Unknown to self-restraint, these boys and girls behave disrespectfully towards and ridicule their elders and teachers. Similarly, due to lack of self-control and discipline immodesty and licentiousness are gaining ground among women. They have freely begun to visit games and entertainments, theatres and picture-houses etc., in the company of any and everyone. Apart from cinema shows, they go wherever they like without any let or hindrance. They disregard any restriction imposed on them by the master of their house or any other well-wisher. Due to lack of self-restraint men refuse to obey the laws of the state, social conventions, the injunctions of the Śāstras, the canons of religion and the instructions of good men, with the result that wantonness is growing even among the males. Having grown voluptuous, people are lapsing from

purity of diet and chastity of conduct. Slaves to their palate and modern amenities, people have begun to take food in hotels where eggs, meat and wine are supplied. All these are unmistakable signs of degeneration. What greater degradation could there be than the use of intoxicating drinks like wine and rum and adultery?

Bestowing serious thought on such a state of affairs, people should bring under control their mind, intellect, senses and body. Man can attain blessedness through control of the senses alone. The Lord has spoken of restraint of the senses too, as a sacrifice in the following verse:—

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये	संयमाग्निषु	जुह्वति ।
शब्दादीन्विषयानन्य	इन्द्रियाग्निषु	जुह्वति ॥

(Gītā IV. 26)

“Others offer as sacrifice the senses of hearing etc., into the fire of self-discipline. Other Yogīs, again offer sound and other objects of perception into the fires of the senses.”

In the verse quoted above the Lord has made it clear that not only restraint of the senses but the enjoyment also of sense-objects through senses that have been brought under control and thereby rid of attachment is a sacrifice.

Just as blessedness is attained through restraint of the senses or the mind alone, it could be equally attained through control of breath alone. Says the Lord:—

अपाने	जुह्वति	प्राणं	प्राणेऽपानं	तथापरे ।
प्राणापानगती	रुद्ध्वा		प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥	
अपरे	नियताहाराः	प्राणान्प्राणेषु	जुह्वति ।	
सर्वेऽप्येते	यज्ञविदो		यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥	

(Gītā IV. 29-30)

“Other Yogīs offer the act of exhalation into that of inhalation; even so others, the act of inhalation into that of exhalation. There are still others, given to the practice of Prāṇāyāma (breath-control), who having regulated their diet and controlled the process of exhalation and inhalation both, throw their vital airs into the vital airs themselves. All these have their sins consumed away by sacrifice and understand the meaning of sacrificial worship.”

It goes without saying that attainment of blessedness becomes much easier when all-round restraint is had recourse to—

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि	प्राणकर्माणि	चापरे ।
आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ	जुह्वति	ज्ञानदीपिते ॥

(Gītā IV. 27)

“Others sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the functions of the vital airs into the fire of Yoga in the shape of self-control, kindled by wisdom.”

Similarly, many more spiritual disciplines have been enumerated under the appellation of “Yajña” or sacrifice in verses 24—30 of Discourse IV of the Gītā. A man can decidedly attain blessedness by consummately going through anyone of those disciplines. The Lord Himself says:—

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
 नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ॥
 एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।
 कर्मजान् विद्धि तान् सर्वानेवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥

(Gītā IV. 31-32)

“Arjuna, Yogīs who enjoy the nectar that has been left over after the performance of a sacrifice attain the eternal Brahma. To the man who does not offer sacrifice, even this world is not happy; how, then, can the other

world be happy? Many such forms of sacrifice have been set forth in detail through the mouth of the Vedas; know them all as involving the action of mind, senses and body. Thus knowing the truth about them you shall be freed from the bondage of action (through their performance).”

The man whose mind, intellect, senses and body are not controlled is no better than an animal. Their control is not possible in any other life than human life, nay, not even in a heavenly body. Therefore, it is man alone who has been recognized as qualified for blessedness; all other lives are forms of existence in which one merely experiences the fruit of one's actions done in a previous human existence. We belong to the human species. Therefore we should work out our salvation by performing actions worthy of a human being. We should not live like animals. If we are spending our time merely in feeding ourselves, sleeping and gratifying our carnal appetite, what is the difference between an animal and a human being? We read in our books on good morals:—

आहारनिद्राभयमैशुनानि समानि चैतानि नृणां पशूनाम्।
ज्ञानं नराणामधिको विशेषो ज्ञानेन हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः॥

(Cāṇakyanīti XVII. 17)

“Filling one's belly, sleeping, fear and sexual commerce—these are common to men and animals. Sense of duty is the only additional faculty that distinguishes human beings. Those devoid of this sense stand on an equal footing with animals.”

This human body has been vouchsafed to us for the redemption of the soul and not for indulging in luxury and comfort and self-gratification nor for heavenly

enjoyment. He who is not alive to this fact is a fool. While sermonizing to His subjects, Lord Śrī Rāma says in the Rāmacaritamānasa:—

एहि तन कर फल बिषय न भाई । स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई॥
नर तनु पाइ बिषयँ मन देहीं । पलटि सुधा ते सठ बिष लेहीं॥
ताहि कबहुँ भल कहइ न कोई । गुंजा गहइ परस मनि खोई॥*

Happiness does not inhere in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. The means of procuring such enjoyments, viz., wealth too, consists of misery alone, inasmuch as the earning and hoarding of wealth generally involve exertion and sin. The consequences of such sin too are very painful both here and hereafter. And there is suffering and suffering alone in protecting wealth against the incursions of the state, thieves and robbers and mendicants, nay, in giving it away, spending it and relinquishing it as well as in its destruction and passing into the hands of others. Therefore the enjoyment of worldly pleasures as well as wealth and other objects are fraught with misery and misery alone. It is through ignorance that a man conceives them to be pleasurable. The great sage Patañjali says:—

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या ।

(Aphorisms on Yoga Sādhana-Pāda, 5)

“Nescience consists in mistaking the impermanent, impure, painful and the non-self respectively as everlasting, pure, pleasurable and one’s own self.”

In other words, to conceive the entire phenomenal

* Sensuous enjoyment, brethren, is not the be-all and end-all of human existence; even heavenly enjoyment is short-lived and ends in sorrow. The fools who devote their mind to the pleasures of sense even after attaining human birth take poison in exchange for nectar. None will ever speak well of him who picks up a pepper-corn throwing away the philosopher’s stone.”

existence which is fleeting, as everlasting; to look upon the body, which is a bundle of impure substances such as flesh and marrow, as holy; to recognize the enjoyments of this world, which all consist of suffering, as so many forms of joy, and to cognize the material body, which is something other than the Self, as one's own self: this is Avidyā.

Sense-gratification in the form of enjoyment of sensuous pleasures is pleasing as nectar in the beginning, but in consequence it is bitter as poison. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद् यत् तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 38)

“The delight which follows from the contact of the senses with their objects is eventually poison-like, though appearing at first as nectar; hence it has been spoken of as Rājasika.”

Hence those seeking blessedness should abstain from enjoying the pleasure of sense; for they alone are the root of all evils. From the recognition of sense-enjoyment as a source of pleasure, springs up attachment for them and attachment alone gives rise to the hankering for such enjoyment on the one hand, and to hatred, enmity and anger towards those who throw obstacles in the way of its gratification, on the other. From anger arises infatuation, which in its turn leads to loss of reason and ultimately brings about our downfall (Gītā II. 62-63). Therefore, the recognition of sense-enjoyment as a source of pleasure gives rise to and develops attachment and aversion, lust and anger, greed and infatuation etc.; and ignorance lies at the root of this recognition. Hence ignorance should

be dispelled by means of wisdom acquired through discrimination and investigation. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(IV. 38)

“On the earth there is no purifier as great as knowledge; he who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of Karmayoga automatically sees the light of Truth in the self in course of time.”

There are many other ways too, of attaining wisdom. Wisdom can be acquired even through the fellowship of exalted souls (Gītā IV. 34-35). Enlightenment can as well be had through faith in and reverence for God, religion, life after death and sacred books (Gītā IV. 39). And the Lord bestows wisdom without fail on the aspirant practising devotion to Him (Gītā X. 9-10). In all these disciplines control of the mind, intellect and senses plays a predominant part. Without self-restraint redemption of the soul is a far cry. Says the Lord:—

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।
वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥

(Gītā VI. 36)

“Yoga is difficult to achieve for one whose mind is not subdued; by him, however, who has the mind under control, and is ceaselessly striving, it can be easily attained through practice. Such is My conviction.”

Therefore, in order to bring the mind under control one should with the help of discretion and dispassion renounce the enjoyments of the world as consisting of misery and perishable by nature.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

(Gītā V. 22)

“The pleasures which are born of sense-contact are verily a source of suffering only (through appearing as enjoyable to the worldly-minded). They have a beginning and an end (they come and go). Arjuna, it is for this reason that a wise man does not indulge in them.”

Without dispassion control of the mind and senses is not possible. A critical knowledge that all objects of sensuous enjoyment are perishable and consist of sorrow leads to dispassion and even so the practice of adoration and meditation too, gives rise to dispassion. That is why for bringing the mind under control the Lord gives a predominant place to repeated effort and dispassion alone:—

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

(Gītā VI. 35)

“The mind is restless no doubt, and difficult to curb, O Arjuna; but it can be brought under control through repeated practice (of meditation) and by cultivating dispassion, O son of Kuntī”.

Through repeated practice of concentration and dispassion the mind is not only brought into control but is also completely silenced. The great sage Patañjali says:—

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ।

(Yoga-Sūtras I. 12)

“Through repeated practice (of concentration) and dispassion the vagaries of the mind are completely put down.”

When the mind itself is completely silenced through repeated effort (at concentration) and dispassion, it is much easier to still the senses thereby. Therefore, the senses too, can be stilled through repeated practice (of concentration) and dispassion. The only stumbling-blocks on the way are attachment and aversion. The Lord has spoken of attachment and aversion as the enemies of a striver (Gītā III. 34). Appearing in the form of lust and anger, attachment and aversion alone lead one astray (Gītā III. 37). For putting an end to all these the Lord exhorts us in the Gītā to control the senses in the first instance and then, restraining the mind, to make short work of the above-named enemies in the shape of passion etc.—

तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।
 पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥
 इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।
 मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥
 एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना ।
 जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥

(Gītā III. 41—43)

“Therefore, Arjuna, you must first control your senses, and then get rid of this evil thing, which obstructs Jñāna (knowledge of the Absolute or Nirguṇa Brahma) and Vijñāna (knowledge of Sākāra Brahma or Manifest Divinity). The senses are said to be greater than the body, but greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is the intellect; and what is greater than the intellect is He (the Self). Thus, Arjuna, knowing that which is higher than the intellect, and subduing the mind by reason, kill this enemy in the form of Desire, that is hard to overcome.”

By controlling as aforesaid the mind, intellect and

senses and applying them all to God, who is truth, consciousness and bliss combined, man attains the highest good. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

तद्बुद्ध्यस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।

गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥

(V. 17)

“Those whose mind and intellect are wholly merged in Him, (nay) who remain constantly established in identity with Him, and have finally become one with Him, their sins being wiped out by wisdom, reach the state whence there is no return.”

Therefore, man should mould his life accordingly.

□□

The Truth and Secret of Desirelessness

Bestowing gifts and accepting them, both constitute the sacred obligations of a Brāhmaṇa. If he practises these in a disinterested spirit, both prove conducive to his blessedness. If a desireless man accepts a gift from another, he does so for the benefit of the latter, without entertaining the feeling of meum, attachment, selfishness and egotism. And if he bestows a gift on another, he does so in the latter's interest only. Hence the acts of receiving and bestowing a gift on the part of a disinterested party both redound to the other's interest. Nay, if the donor bestows a gift in a disinterested spirit and the recipient too accepts it in the same spirit, both of them attain blessedness by virtue of their disinterested spirit. If it is urged that if Mukti were so cheap how would it be possible to make it available to all and sundry, our reply is that there is no shortage of Mukti in the storehouse of God. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥

(III. 11)

“Foster the gods through this (sacrifice), and let the gods foster you. Thus fostering one another disinterestedly, you will attain the highest good.”

Thus through desirelessness both—the donor and the donee get redeemed.

If a man comes to realize the truth and secret of desirelessness his behaviour naturally becomes very noble

and unique. When one ceases to have any selfish interest in any object, individual or action and is also completely rid of attachment, sense of possession and self-esteem, every action of that individual gets sublimated and hallowed and acquires the virtue of purifying others.

Hence we should realize the true nature and secret of disinterested action. It is extremely noble on one's part to oblige others; but if anyone denies himself comfort in order that he may get more comfort, such an act of self-denial does not fall under the category of desirelessness. As for example we sometimes quit our seat in a railway compartment in order to make room for another and take our seat on the floor in order that the man for whom we make this sacrifice may reciprocate our behaviour. Though of a high order, such an act of self-abnegation does not come up to the level of desirelessness.

Likewise, if we extend our hospitality and attention to a high government officer and administer in every way to his comforts with the motive of extorting in return some valuable service from him, the service we render to him is actuated by interested motives only.

Similarly, suppose we are travelling by rail or road in the company of some beloved friend, kinsman or relative and insist on our paying the journey expenses of both. Encouraged by this noble behaviour, the other party too, makes a similar offer. If this insistence of ours is prompted by the expectation that the sacrifice on our part will awaken a similar spirit in our companion and will obviate the necessity of our actually making the sacrifice, the generous offer made by us is actuated by interested motives.

Suppose we spurn honour, praise and pride of place on receiving them, but get them in a larger measure in consequence of our rejecting them and feel gratified. This too, represents the attitude of one who is prompted by selfish motives.

Therefore he who serves others with a desire to attain worldly objects can attain only worldly objects; he who does so with a desire to attain heavenly bliss can attain heavenly bliss alone; while he who serves others with the motive of securing honour, praise and prestige can be rewarded with these alone. Blessedness, however, can be attained only through service done in a disinterested spirit.

True disinterested spirit is there where there is neither ostentation nor selfishness, attachment or desire within the heart and where everything is done without any desire and only in the interests of others. Suppose for example that someone calls at yours with some fruits or vegetables and importunes you to accept them on the plea that they have been received as a present from the father-in-law of his son, and feels aggrieved if you do not accept them on any account. Under such circumstances your disinterested spirit remains undisturbed even if you accept his present in the least quantity for his satisfaction. If, on the other hand, you vainly decline the offer, priding on your vow not to accept such gratuitous presents, nay, reminding him of that vow and twitting him for having brought those articles to you even though he had knowledge of your vow and caring not if he feels aggrieved or insulted by your insolent behaviour, your non-acceptance too, does not fall under the category of disinterestedness. Of course, if anyone importunes you only as a matter of courtesy to accept a gift and is not inclined

in his heart of hearts to part with it, disinterestedness consists only in declining the offer.

Suppose someone sincerely importunes us to utilize his services in some pious cause and if in response to his pressing request we take some work of public utility from him merely for his satisfaction, the obligation we accept from him does not detract us from our disinterested spirit. Again, suppose we render some personal service to a friend of ours and the latter accepts our service only in order to oblige us, we should feel that he is kindly disposed towards us. Far from priding ourselves on the fact that we are doing some service to him, we should on the other hand, feel that while we are rendering ordinary service to him, in the shape of merely feeding him and giving him water etc., to drink and administering medicinal doses to him and so on, he in his turn is doing signal service to us by accepting our services for our spiritual good, and we should thus acknowledge our debt to him. The feeling of indebtedness alone constitutes the spirit of disinterestedness. The indebted man feels that the materials by means of which he is rendering service to anyone all belong to the Lord; the hands with which he is serving him have also been bestowed on him by the Lord and the Lord Himself indwells those whom he serves. It is therefore but reasonable and fair, he says to himself that service is being rendered to the Lord Himself by means of materials supplied by Him and with the hands bestowed by Him. If, however, even while one is actually engaged in service, the feeling of self-esteem or the consciousness of placing the man whom we serve under obligation crops up in our mind, it is regrettable. Such a line of thought reflects the spirit of disinterestedness.

If anyone points out our faults, we should neither give way to anger nor feel distressed to hear his adverse criticism. We should rather rejoice to hear it and feel grateful to the caviler. For, if anyone levels a false accusation against us, we shall not lose anything thereby. The Lord is seated within the heart of all and is All-just. He knows everything and would not punish us on the mere allegation of another. What, then, is there to be worried about? If we feel concerned at all, we cannot be said to have faith in the Lord or His justice. If he is justified in his allegation we should mend ourselves and look upon the caviler as our greatest well-wisher. We should acknowledge our debt to him as to a preceptor inasmuch as he is our benefactor. We narrate below a story to illustrate this point.

There was a Vaiśya (a member of the mercantile community). One day he approached a saint and said to him, "O eminent sir, if anyone behaves contrary to my expectations I feel irritated and distressed and a feeling of hatred is roused against that man." On this the saint told him that this was altogether undesirable and added that if anyone acted against one's will it should be taken to be a gesture of exceptional goodwill on the part of the Lord. Admonished thus, the Vaiśya undertook a vow not to feel distressed or irritated nor to harbour ill-will towards anyone, however undesirable or provoking one's behaviour towards him. In the vicinity of that merchant belonging to the Vaiśya community there lived another merchant, who was a Brāhmaṇa by caste. When the latter heard of his vow, he began to endeavour to break that vow. Whenever an occasion arose he would invariably

throw his weight against the cause taken up by the Vaiśya, no matter whether it was righteous or otherwise. The Vaiśya, however, would never feel provoked or aggrieved nor would he harbour ill-will towards the Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇa never succeeded in spite of continued efforts carried on by him for a long time.

On one occasion, on the day following the Holī (the fifteenth day of the bright half of Phālguna) the Brāhmaṇa approached the Vaiśya and said to him, "Brother, you are a benevolent man. I am leaving today for my father-in-law's. Would it be possible for you to accompany me to my father-in-law's with this earthen vessel containing sweetmeats on your head?" The Vaiśya noticed that the vessel had the figure of a Svāstika marked on it, was covered with a lid and was entwined with a thread consisting of red and yellow strands. The innocent man agreed to do as he was bid and proceeded with the vessel placed on his head. Finely dressed, the Brāhmaṇa followed at the heels of the Vaiśya, with a stick in hand. The vessel contained nightsoil and mud. No sooner had they reached the centre of the bazar than the Brāhmaṇa broke the vessel with his stick. The Vaiśya was bathed all over with the nightsoil and mud. With intent to provoke the Vaiśya the Brāhmaṇa heartily laughed and enjoyed his detestable plight. The Vaiśya too, joined his laughter and enjoyed the odious joke. "A fool that you are, why should you laugh?" Inquired the Brāhmaṇa. "I rejoice to note the grace of God as well as that of yours. I deem it a very great favour of yours that I have successfully eluded the grip of wrath and sorrow. You have extended your grace to me and rendered me capable in the same way as a

teacher keeps a watch over his pupil and makes him competent. I am indebted to you for your kindness.” These words of the Vaiśya changed the Brāhmaṇa’s heart, and falling on the Vaiśya’s feet the Brāhmaṇa began to weep. After a while he spoke to the Vaiśya as follows:—“I have committed a great offence. For this Yama (the god of retribution) will consign me to a terrible hell.” The Vaiśya, however, replied, “Had I been harmed or offended by you, then alone would Yama condemn you to perdition. I, on the other hand, acknowledge my debt to you. Under such circumstances Yama has no power to throw you into hell.” This mental attitude of the Vaiśya reflects his disinterested spirit.

Therefore, while doing everything we should feel in the interests of all that whatever we are doing we are doing in obedience to the Lord’s bidding and for the sake of the Lord and that it constitutes His own work. Or we should feel that we are a tool in the hands of the Lord, that He holds the reins of our mind, intellect and senses, so that the Lord alone is prompting our activities and that whatever is happening is coming about according to His will.

The following should be taken to be the criterion of such an attitude of mind, viz., that he who has developed this attitude would be incapable of doing anything interdicted by the Śāstras; for wherever one’s actions are prompted by the Lord, how can He inspire actions which infringe His own laws? If one is found perpetrating an action prohibited by the Śāstras, it should be concluded that such an action is not inspired by God but is prompted by desire (Vide Gītā III. 37). An infant depending entirely on its

teacher and learning the alphabet from him is incapable of committing error inasmuch as the teacher holds its hand in his own and makes it scribble with a pen. The child commits mistakes through ignorance only when it begins to write of its own accord without the guidance of the teacher. Even so actions prohibited by the Śāstras are possible only where there is ignorance, or desire. Where there is no desire, that is to say, where the spirit of disinterestedness is fully present, and where there is absolute dependence on the Lord, actions prohibited by the Śāstras are out of the question.

Realizing, as aforesaid, the truth about and the secret of disinterestedness and completely shaking off egotism, the feeling of meum and attachment, one should perform all actions enjoined by the Śāstras in an absolutely disinterested spirit. This will speedily enable one to realize God.



Means of Arresting the Decline of Righteousness and Growth of Sin

The Lord says in the Gītā:—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥

(IV. 7)

“Arjuna, whenever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body Myself forth.”

Referring to the above-quoted verse many people ask the following question: “We find in the world today an awful decline of righteousness and a tremendous rise of sin. Why, then, does the Lord not appear in our midst even under such circumstances?” Our reply to this question is: The decline of righteousness and growth of sin are beyond question. But the reason why the Lord does not appear in our midst is known to Him alone.

There were many assaults on the Hindu faith during the period of Muslim rule. Many sacred books of the Hindus were set on fire. A large number of Hindus were converted to Islam by force. Those who did not accept the Muslim faith were compelled to get themselves enrolled as Muslims during the census. A community known by the name of Qayamkhanis came into existence in Rajasthan through this process alone. Members of this community continued to follow the customs and usages of the Hindus in their weddings, but in course of time they became full-fledged Muslims. In this way the Hindu

faith was subjected to many-sided attacks. The Hindus, however, were prepared in those days to immolate themselves for the sake of their own faith. The two sons of Guru Gobind Singh allowed themselves to be suffocated to death by being made to stand inside a wall which was built around them, and shut up in it. They did not, however, accept the Muslim faith.

During the period of British rule Christian missionaries converted a number of Hindus to Christianity by ministering to them through schools and colleges and hospitals etc., and tempting them with offers of land, shelter and money and blandishing them. They continue to do so even now. In those days the Hindus were staunch in their faith and full of religious fervour. That is why the faith continued to hold its own even in those hard times. At the present time, however, many Hindus have themselves begun to show disrespect to religion and God. This has greatly impaired and is impairing the cause of Hindu Dharma.

Sages and seers who flourished in the past had insight into the past, present and future and had direct experience of things. Whatever they have written on the subject of Dharma is highly mysterious, significant and wholesome here as well as hereafter. Sage Kaṇāda says:—

यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः ।

(Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras. I. 2)

“Dharma (righteousness) is that which leads to material advancement (in this world) and final beatitude (after death).”

The Hindu religion is dateless. That is why it is known by the name of Sanātana Vedic Religion. Its root lies in

the Vedas and it finds amplification in the Upaniṣads, the Smṛti-texts, the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas and other sacred books. Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā represents the cream of all this sacred lore. In the Mahābhārata we read:—

गीता सुगीता कर्तव्या किमन्यैः शास्त्रसंग्रहैः ।
या स्वयं पद्मनाभस्य मुखपद्माद् विनिःसृता ॥

(Mahā. Bhīṣma. xliii. 1)

“What purpose will be served by collections of other sacred books? The Gītā (alone) should be thoroughly studied, which issued forth from the lotus-lips of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself (a manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu, who has a lotus sprung from His navel).”

सर्वशास्त्रमयी गीता सर्वदेवमयो हरिः ।
सर्वतीर्थमयी गङ्गा सर्ववेदमयो मनुः ॥

(Ibid., xliii. 2)

“The Gītā epitomizes all the sacred books. Śrī Hari (Lord Viṣṇu) represents all gods (in His person). The Gaṅga combines all sacred waters, while the Code of Manu is the essence of all the Vedas.”

Therefore the Gītā, which is the cream of all the sacred books of Hinduism, should be made a subject of special study.

The Hindu religion is the oldest of all religions. Of all the principal faiths claiming a following in the world there is not one which is older than the Sanātana Vedic Religion. All the rest that have been promulgated under the name of religion are of a later origin. For example, the Islamic faith which was founded by Prophet Muhammad and which recognizes the Qoran as its scripture has been in existence for the last 1400 years. The Christian faith was founded 2000 years ago, while Buddhism has been

in existence for the last 2500 years. The Sanātana Vedic Religion, on the other hand, is dateless and eternal. Hence it is called Sanātana (everlasting). No other religion stands comparison to it. It is replete with emphasis on compassion, harmlessness, beneficence, catholicity, self-abnegation and other virtues. By following in practice whatever has been written on the subject of Dharma by the great Ṛṣis of old, who had insight into the past, the present and the future, after entering into its spirit and subjecting it to a deep scrutiny we too, can directly perceive its truth. But the pity of it is that a large majority of our co-religionists have no idea of the great, sublime and far-seeing reality and inwardness of the said Dharma. That has been and is responsible for the decline of Hindu Religion.

As regards the root meaning of the word 'Hindu' it should be remembered that the name has been formed by taking the first syllable of the word 'Himālaya' and joining to it the concluding syllable of the word 'Sindhu' (meaning the ocean). In this way the land bounded on the north by the Himālayas and on the south by the Indian Ocean came to be known as 'Hindusthāna' and the corrupt form of it is 'Hindustāna'; the people inhabiting it began to call themselves Hindus and the system of beliefs followed by them passed by the name of Hindu faith or religion.

The country formerly went by the name of Bhāratavarṣa. At the dawn of creation it was the basic centre teaching Dharma to all mankind. In the Manusmṛti we read:—

एतद्देशप्रसूतस्य

सकाशादग्रजन्मनः ।

स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन् पृथिव्यां सर्वमानवाः ॥

“Let all men on the earth receive instruction in their respective duties—moral code—from the Brāhmaṇas of Bhāratavarṣa.”

Accordingly the inhabitants of the entire globe received instruction in their moral code from the people of Bhāratavarṣa. The same Bhāratavarṣa is now known by the name of Hindustāna or India.

All the ancient works bearing on religion, ethics, the science of the spirit, astronomy, medicine, grammar etc., and throwing light on the Hindu religion are written in the Saṁskṛta language. For lack of proper study they are all getting more or less extinct. India having remained under foreign yoke for a long period the popularity of Saṁskṛta waned to a very considerable extent. But it should be remembered that no other language is so excellent as the Saṁskṛta. It is the most ancient language. Being the language of gods it is known as Devabhāṣā or Devavāṇī (the tongue of heavenly beings) and the script in which it is written is called Devanāgarī (the script of the gods). It has many peculiarities of its own as compared with other languages. The grammar of the Saṁskṛta language is something out of the common. No other language in the world can claim to have such a perfect grammar. One verb can assume hundreds of forms. It has its own peculiarity in the matter of gender and number etc. Even so the calculations of Indian Astronomy are still well-known and yield visible results. Now let us come to Āyurveda (the Indian science of medicine). Our ancient sages, who had insight into the past, the present and the future, laid the foundations of the science of Āyurveda after great labour on the basis of their personal experience.

It is full of momentous and wonderful information bearing on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, a rich *materia medica* detailing the names and form and properties of medicines and the methods of preparing them as well as the peculiarities of herbs and roots. Lack of respect for this system of medicine, however, is responsible for its steady decline. We should, therefore, pay more attention and regard to this system. If we hold it in greater esteem important discoveries can be made in it. Popularity of the English language pushed back and is still pushing back the knowledge of Saṁskṛta. Because of this setback and due to the popularity of allopathic medicines the system of Āyurveda has suffered much. Education through the medium of English exerts such a subtle influence on the mind of the students that though remaining unchanged externally they get internally imbued with western ideas and become more or less westernized. The popularity of this foreign language, foreign dress, foreign diet, the foreign mode of living and foreign ways has had and is still having a very adverse effect on Hindu Religion.

Due to the decline of religious spirit people rushed to use allopathic medicines when attacked by diseases. Allopathic medicines and allopathic doctors have become so popular today that the percentage of those abstaining from these medicines is very low indeed. Allopathic medicines are largely prepared from impure substances and involve destruction of life. But the moral and religious sense having disappeared in us, people do not at all care to perceive that organic substances like flesh, marrow, bones, glands and blood of animals, eggs and wine are being administered to them in a concealed form in the

name of medicine. How deplorable it is! This is contributing in a large measure to the decline of Dharma.

Dining in hotels is also responsible for the great decline of Dharma. Even if a man dining in hotels does not take meat and eggs, the food that he takes is at any rate contaminated by contact with such impure substances. It should be noted that meat, eggs and other such articles of food are highly impure and odious. They involve destruction of life. If we critically examine the evils associated with these articles it will appear that they are too hateful to deserve being touched. Even so the use of intoxicating drinks like wine kills our pious sentiments and perverts our judgment. Meat-eating is a sin, but drinking is a major sin. Our scriptures have catalogued hundreds of sins, of which four are major sins. Lord Manu says:—

ब्रह्महत्या सुरापानं स्तेयं गुर्वङ्गनागमः ।
महान्ति पातकान्याहुः संसर्गश्चापि तैः सह ॥

(Manusmṛiti XI. 55)

“Killing a Brāhmaṇa, drinking wine, theft (of gold), sexual commerce with the wife of one’s own teacher and social communication with those guilty of the aforesaid sins; the wise call these major sins.”

The idea is that taking the life of any human being whatsoever, is a sin, while killing a Brāhmaṇa is a major sin. The use of any intoxicating drug such as Gānjā is a sin, while drinking is a major sin. Sexual commerce with any women other than one’s wedded wife is a sin, while adultery with the wife of one’s own preceptor is a major sin. Theft of any article belonging to another is a sin, while theft of gold is a major sin. Moreover, he

too who holds social communication with those guilty of these major sins is recognized as a major sinner. Hence all these major sins must be avoided at all costs. Besides these the following and numerous other evils are getting rampant in our society. Completely abandoning them we should make an endeavour to see that our society makes steady progress.

Our society is considerably going down in the scale of evolution. Undesirable customs, extravagance, the dowry system and entertaining wedding parties etc., with impure and intoxicating articles of food and drink prohibited by the scriptures and involving destruction of life—all these are exceedingly harmful to society. Efforts should be made to purge the society of these evils.

The practice of seeing dramas being staged and cinema pictures is most undesirable; for they mostly contain the pictures and stories of young women and belles, their coquettish gestures and sentiments and oglings, which not only excite passion in members of the opposite sex but incite them to practise adultery and lead them to ruin. Hence one should never see dramas and cinema pictures.

Playing at dice and card-playing, taking part in gambling and lottery, and indulging in speculation etc., are doing tangible harm to the nation. They involve a waste of the precious moments of human life, taint the intellect with sin and pervert one's judgment and lead to error, sloth and indolence. All these pursuits are exceedingly injurious to the Indian nation and society. Hence they should be completely abandoned.

Modesty and the sense of decorum too are fast dwindling in the fair sex. Ladies talk freely and boldly

in their parents' home as well as in the house of their husband and visit theatres and cinemas with men who are in no way related to them. The aforesaid virtues are gradually declining even among males. People feel shy in showing respect to elders, paying due honour to them and observing the bounds of decorum with regard to them, behaving politely and reverently towards them and bowing to them and are neglecting these healthy practices. This is, however, a great shortcoming. Getting rid of this fault we should behave meekly and modestly before our elders and treat them with respect and love.

In the matter of personal purity and morality too, people are getting very lax. As regards personal purity, many people nowadays make a fun of it and despise it because they fail to understand its true significance. Due to their English education and contact with Englishmen people make much of only outward cleanliness with the result that personal purity as enjoined by our Śāstras is being ignored. They consider the use of soap, which is an impure article, as conducive to purity and look upon the method of washing one's hands with soil and water as primitive and uncivilized. In preference to the traditional methods of cooking food in the kitchen, which are sanctioned by the Śāstras, people have begun to lay stress on cleanliness alone rather than on purity as enjoined by the Śāstras. Placing the articles of food on a common table a number of people partake of them moving all round picking up things with their own hands rendered impure by putting them into their mouths. In this way they partake of the remains of others' food and drink water from a tumbler with the same impure hands without washing

them. Nay, others too, drink water from the same tumbler indiscriminately. They go on eating and drinking water at random while moving about all the time.

It is unwise to eat while moving about. The celebrated poet Kālidāsa is said to have told King Bhoja as follows:—

खादन्न गच्छामि हसन्न जल्पे
गतं न शोचामि कृतं न मन्ये।
द्वाभ्यां तृतीयो न भवामि राजन्
किं कारणं भोज भवामि मूर्खः ॥

“I never go about while eating nor do I talk while laughing. I never grieve for what is past nor do I take pride in what has been accomplished (by me). Nor again do I intrude (as a third person) upon a couple of persons (deliberating together), O king! How, then, am I a fool, O Bhoja?”

Taking all these facts into consideration we should devote more attention to personal purity and good morals; for external purity in the form of these virtues is helpful in attaining internal purity. Sage Patañjali says in his Yoga-Sūtras:—

शौचात्स्वाङ्गजुगुप्सा परैरसंसर्गः ।

(Yoga-Darśana II. 40)

“By cleaning one’s body (repeatedly) a feeling of disgust is aroused towards one’s own body and a disinclination to mix with others.”

The idea is that through observance of personal purity a sense of impurity is developed in respect of one’s body, leading to a feeling of disgust or detachment with respect to one’s body. And secondly it takes away one’s inclination to mix with others or one’s liking for such contact. In this way one’s mind gets purified.

Getting addicted through ignorance to the delights of the palate and dandyism, a life of ease and comfort, luxury and dalliance and voluptuousness, many of our countrymen are casting their piety and good morals to the winds. But critical examination will show that there is no joy whatsoever in these; on the other hand they lead to one's downfall only. Therefore, men seeking their own elevation should exercise control over their mind, senses and body, recognizing all these pleasures (through one's critical faculty) as consisting of sorrow, transient and momentary.

The Lord too, says in the Gītā:—

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

(V. 22)

“The pleasures which are born of sense-contacts are really sources of pain (though appearing as enjoyable to worldly-minded people). They have a beginning and an end (they come and go). Arjuna, it is for this reason that a wise man does not take delight in them.”

Under cover of devotion, spiritual enlightenment and piety many impostors living as householders or clad in the garb of Sādhus and Samnyāsīs (recluses) violate the chastity of women and rob them of their money. Therefore, taking care not to fall into the clutches of such swindlers living in unchaste surroundings and covetous of money, one should ever remain cautious. Exalted souls of a high order look upon even honour, praise and pre-eminence as loathsome like dirt and regard it as disgraceful to offer to others the water in which their feet have been washed and get others to offer worship to and wave lights around them. In fact they alone who covet honour, praise, worship

and pre-eminence do so. Enlightened and exalted souls of a high order invariably shun all these. Hence we should always scrupulously beware of such people.

In the sphere of business too—lying, deceit, theft, dishonesty, cheating, perfidy and other evils have grown very rampant these days, so much so that it has become difficult to get even articles of food and drink in an unadulterated form. Ghee is sold after adulterating it with vegetable products, oils with white oil, milk with arrow-root or milk powder; and similar is the case with other articles of food. This is to deceive the customers and is most unfair to them.

In order to defraud the Government of the various taxes levied by them most of the people practise black-marketeering, dishonesty, lying and deceit. This is undesirable. To pay less to the Government than what is due to them by way of tax is not so sinful as to infringe the divine law by practising mendacity, deceit and black-marketeering, and prepare false account-books.

The practice of giving and taking bribe has also considerably grown. Judicial officers, members of Panchayat-boards, Government officials, members of the Railway staff and all others should firmly adhere to the rules of propriety, duly discharging their respective duties. From greed or fear or under pressure one should never abandon the path of justice and do a thing which is undesirable.

Seekers of blessedness would do well to make an endeavour to give up completely all the vices enumerated above. Even under the most trying circumstances they should never use directly or indirectly impure and odious substances like eggs and meat and intoxicating drinks like

wine. Nor should they fritter away their life by spending their time in seeing dramas and cinema pictures, playing at dice and card-playing, and in witnessing games and public shows etc. As far as possible they should abstain even from intoxicants like Bhāga, tobacco, BīRīs and cigarettes, and should never ignore the rules of personal purity and good conduct contained in the Śāstras. Nay, they should deal with all in an ideal manner with truthfulness and impartiality, in a selfless spirit with an eye to the good of the world and for the sake of the Lord's pleasure. By dealing in an ideal manner with all as pointed out above one's mind gets purified and one can easily attain Liberation in the same way as Tulādhāra Vaiśya and others got liberated through selfless business.

For one's spiritual good strenuous efforts should be made to cultivate Devotion, spiritual knowledge and dispassion and practise virtue, and should never give up righteousness on any account from concupiscence, greed, fear or bashfulness even under the most trying circumstances. In the Mahābhārata we read:—

न जातु कामान् भयान् लोभाद्
 धर्मं त्यजेज्जीवितस्यापि हेतोः ।
 नित्यो धर्मः सुखदुःखे त्वनित्ये
 जीवो नित्यो—हेतुरस्य त्वनित्यः ॥

(Svargārohaṇa., V. 63)

“From concupiscence, fear, greed or even for (the preservation of one's) life one should never give up righteousness. (For) virtue is abiding, while joy and sorrow are fleeting; life is eternal, while the incentive to life is transient.”

Therefore an earnest effort should be made till the

end of one's life to practise virtue. For the entire human race Lord Manu has pointed out the following ten constituents of Dharma:—

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

(Manusmṛti VI. 92)

“Firmness, forbearance, mind-control, non-thieving, purity (of body and mind), control of the senses, Sāttvika understanding, Sāttvika knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger—these are the ten constituents of Dharma.”

He goes on to tell us the reward of practising the aforesaid virtues;—

दश लक्षणानि धर्मस्य ये विप्राः समधीयते ।
अधीत्य चानुवर्तन्ते ते यान्ति परमां गतिम् ॥

(Ibid., VI. 93)

“Those Brāhmaṇas who acquire knowledge of the aforesaid ten constituents of Dharma and, coming to know their true character, pursue them, attain the highest goal.”

Therefore a man should diligently practise virtue.

□□

Glory of Even-mindedness

For attaining an exalted state, even-mindedness is imperative for a striver. Even-mindedness can be attained only when one altogether ceases to have likes and dislikes. Hence the Lord unequivocally says in the Gītā that a striver should not be swayed by likes and dislikes. Both these are antagonistic to a striver or stand in the way of one's spiritual discipline (Gītā III. 34). A man discharging his duties unswayed by these undoubtedly realizes God (Gītā II. 64-65). Hence a striver would do well to give up partiality and prejudice altogether and to establish equanimity in his heart. Even-mindedness alone is Yoga in the real sense of the term (vide Gītā II. 48). Before taking up the discussion of Dhyānayoga in Discourse VI of Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā the Lord glorifies this even-mindedness in the following words:—

जितात्मनः प्रशान्तस्य परमात्मा समाहितः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु तथा मानापमानयोः ॥
ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः ।
युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥
सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु
साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते ॥

(VI. 7—9)

“The Supreme Spirit is firmly established in the knowledge of the self-controlled man whose mind is perfectly calm in the midst of pairs of opposites, such as cold and heat, joy and sorrow, honour and ignominy. The Yogī whose mind is sated with Jñāna (Knowledge of Nirguṇa Brahma) and Vijñāna (Knowledge of manifest

Divinity), who is unchangeable under all circumstances, whose senses are thoroughly subdued, and to whom a clod, a stone and a piece of gold make no difference, is spoken of as a God-realized soul. He, who regards well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals, mediators, the objects of hatred, relatives, virtuous and the sinful alike, stands supreme."

Besides this, while describing the characteristics of His beloved devotee, the Lord clearly says:—

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
 शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥
 तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
 अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

(XII. 18-19)

"He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, joy and sorrow etc., and is free from attachment, he who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to Me, that man is dear to Me."

Even though pointing out the absence of joy and sorrow, anxiety and desire, the Lord has glorified in this context even-mindedness and the absence of likes and dislikes; and while depicting in Discourse XIV the characteristics of a God-realized soul who has risen above the three Guṇas or modes of Prakṛti, the Lord explicitly says:—

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।
 तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥
 मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
 सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

(Gītā XIV. 24-25)

"He who takes sorrow and joy alike, is established

in the Self, regards a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value, receives both pleasant and unpleasant things in the same spirit, views censure and praise alike, he who is alike to honour and ignominy, is equal to friend and foe, and has renounced the sense of doership in all undertakings, he is said to have risen above the three Guṇas."

A striver would therefore be well-advised to give up altogether and discriminative feelings such as partiality and prejudice, thinking of the Lord as present everywhere without distinction and depending upon Him under all circumstances. He should not entertain a bad opinion about anyone nor should he pry into others' faults, much less talk of or dwell on them. He should stabilize in his mind the feeling of uniform goodwill towards the entire living creation. While speaking of the formless Absolute, the Lord characterizes the strivers engaged in such worship as "intent on the good of all created beings"—सर्वभूतहिते रताः (vide XII. 4). In Gītā V. 25 too the elimination of discrimination and remaining devoted to the good of all living beings have been recognized as a means to God-realization.

A profound study of the text of the Gītā can clearly bring home to us that discrimination alone is the root cause of likes and dislikes, joy and sorrow, anxiety, fear and all other morbid affections. Hence it is imperative on a striver to give up the feeling of discrimination altogether.

A striver should make it a point not to entertain a hankering, longing or desire to have his demand met. He should not allow a feeling of worry, grief, fear and uneasiness of any other kind to arise in his mind. The Lord also clearly says in the Gītā V. 20:—

न प्रहृष्येत्प्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत्प्राप्य चाप्रियम् ।
स्थिरबुद्धिरसंमूढो ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मणि स्थितः ॥

“He, who, with reason firm and free from doubt, does not rejoice on obtaining what is agreeable, and does not feel perturbed on meeting with the unpleasant, that knower of Brahma lives eternally in identity with It.”

The importance of even-mindedness has been shown as under even in V. 18 and 19:—

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥
इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।
निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद् ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥

“The wise look with the same eye on a Brāhmaṇa endowed with learning and culture, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a pariah. Even here is the mortal plane conquered by those whose mind is established in equanimity; since the Absolute is free from blemish and equanimous, hence they are established in the Eternal.”

Even while dealing with men according to their rank or position the following discipline should be pursued in order to stabilize one's even-mindedness and vision of equality everywhere. A man should view alike the joy and sorrow of all in the entire living creation in the same way as one views alike the pleasure and pain of all one's limbs, such as the head, hands, feet and anus etc., with which he is identified in an equal degree even though dealing with them differently as one would with members of the four grades of society (the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra). In this way it is possible as a matter of course to deal with all according to the rank and position of each.

The Lord too, deals with all according to the deserts of each, even though viewing them alike. This has been elucidated in Gītā IX. 29 as follows:—

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम्॥

“I am equally present in all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me. They, however, who devoutly worship Me abide in Me, and I also stand revealed in them.”

In Gītā XIII. 9 as well the Lord recognizes constant evenness of mind in the midst of favourable and unfavourable circumstances as a factor contributory to the discipline of Jñānayoga and eulogizes in verses 27-28 of the same discourse the man viewing God as uniformly present everywhere, declaring the attainment of the supreme goal as its reward.

Material objects, earthly state and circumstances etc., are transient. No striver banking on these—recognizing them as one’s own—can shed discrimination and attain even-mindedness. As these are had by God’s grace according to the dispensation of the Lord. They should be turned to account for the pleasure of the Lord alone. To seek to derive pleasure from them after getting united with them is a road to degradation; for anyone actuated by desire can never remain established in equanimity. Hence a striver should completely shake off attachment, desire, the sense of possession and fear. All these evils have their origin in discrimination and these in their turn continue to foster discrimination. In order to root out all these evils, therefore, a striver should cultivate a feeling of disgust for worldly pleasures and one’s body, taking them to be transient and sorrow in disguise. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते।

आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः॥

“The pleasures which are born of sense-contacts are really sources of pain (though appearing as enjoyable to

worldly-minded people). They have a beginning and an end (they come and go). Arjuna, it is for this reason that a wise man does not indulge in them."

Attachment is got rid of even by turning the account in a disinterested spirit for the sake of the Lord the capacity and objects acquired by grace of God. When the sense of mineness with regard to them is given up no fresh attachment springs up. In this way by getting rid of present attachment and guarding against fresh attachment even-mindedness can be easily attained as a matter of course; for partiality and prejudice alone lie at the root of discrimination.

Joy and sorrow as well as gain and loss are transitory. There cannot be any lasting connection with them. It is entirely wrong to entertain a feeling of mineness, hope, desire or fear with regard to living beings or inanimate objects with which one cannot have a lasting connection. It is due to this error only that attachments of various kinds, agitation, anger, greed, fear, uneasiness, disquietude and other such morbid affections arise in the mind. Therefore, giving up attachment for joy and fear of agony, a striver should ever remain established in equanimity. For this the Lord says in the Gītā II.15:—

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥

"Arjuna, the wise man to whom sorrow and joy are alike, and who is not tormented by these contacts, becomes eligible for immortality."

In the Gītā II. 56 He says:—

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

"The sage whose mind remains unperturbed in sorrows, who is free from passion, fear and anger, is called stable of mind."

The likes and dislikes of a striver who remains equipoised in joy and sorrow get easily eliminated. He who seeks to satisfy his desires cannot remain equipoised in joy and sorrow, much less in the midst of favourable or unfavourable circumstances; how, then, can he remain equipoised in any other circumstances? Therefore —

One should remain established in equanimity on being freed from likes and dislikes in the midst of joy and sorrow, gains and loss, and on meeting with agreeable and disagreeable objects and circumstances obtained or occasioned by force of destiny involuntarily or voluntarily or through the will of someone else.

Even-mindedness is of three kinds:—

(1) that constituting the nature of God; (2) that abiding in the heart of realized soul and (3) that enjoined on a striver. Gītā V. 19 depicts the evenness constituting the very nature of God. XI. 7—9 that abiding in the heart of an enlightened Yogī, XII. 18-19 that found in a God-realized devotee, XIV. 24-25 that abiding in an exalted soul who has risen above the three Guṇas, II. 15 that found in a striver treading that path of Knowledge (Sāṅkhyayoga), II. 38 that characterizing all the types of strivers including those treading the paths of Knowledge (Sāṅkhyayoga) and Disinterested Action (Karmayoga), and II.48 that distinguishing a striver treading the Path of Disinterested Action. The equanimity abiding in the heart of a realized soul is the ideal striven to be attained by a striver. Therefore a man should make special efforts to attain even-mindedness of every description.

Worship of the Attributeless and Formless Divinity

This human body has been vouchsafed to us for God-realization. He, however, who devotes it solely to the enjoyments of the world instead of employing it in an endeavour for God-realization has to rue it bitterly later on.

Admonishing the people of Ayodhyā, Lord Śrī Rāma says:—

“It is by a great good fortune that you have secured a human body, which—as is declared by all the scriptures—is difficult even for gods to attain. It is a tabernacle suitable for spiritual discipline, a gateway to Liberation. He who fails to earn a good destiny hereafter even on attaining it reaps torture in the other world and beats his head in remorse, wrongly attributing the blame to Time, Fate and God.”*

A Śruti text also says:—

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति
न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।

(First half of Kena Up., II. 5)

“It is well and good if one comes to realize the truth in this (very) life. Great ruination will follow if one does not realize the Truth in this life.”

* बड़े भाग मानुष तन पावा । सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा ॥
साधन धाम मोच्छ कर द्वारा । पाइ न जेहिं परलोक सँवारा ॥
सो परत्र दुख पावइ सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाइ ॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttara. XLI. 40, 43)

Therefore, concluding by dint of reason the body, the world as well as the enjoyments of all the worlds extending up to Satyaloka (the highest heaven, the realm of Brahmā) to be momentary, perishable and dreamlike, and spurning them in disgust, one should be free from passion. It is imperative to achieve this end speedily according to the precepts of exalted souls during this very lifetime. Says Yama (the god of retribution) to Naciketā:—

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया
दुर्ग पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

(Kāṭha Up., I.iii. 14)

“Awake, rise and, approaching the worthy, know about God (from them); for the wise (knowing the past, present and future) speak of the path leading to Him as difficult like the sharpened edge of a razor, which is difficult to tread on.”

Although the path leading to the attributeless and formless Brahma (the Absolute) is difficult, the Lord declares it as easy to tread for a man not identified with the body (vide Gītā VI. 28). Therefore, shaking off this identification with the body, a striver should endeavour to acquire true knowledge of God, which is most difficult to acquire. Now a faint indication of the attributeless and formless Brahma (the Absolute) is attempted in the following lines of purposes of worship:—

The aspect of the attributeless and formless Brahma which is capable of being known is called “Jñeya” (that which is worth knowing). It is the reward, however, of such knowledge which constitutes the true nature of

Brahma. The Lord says:—

ज्ञेयं यत्तत्प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वामृतमश्नुते ।
अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥

(Gītā XIII. 12)

“I shall speak to you at length about that which ought to be known, and knowing which one attains immortality (in the form of Supreme Bliss). That transcendent Brahma, who is the lord of beginningless entities, is said to be neither Sat (being) nor Asat (non-being).”

The aforesaid true nature of Brahma is beyond being and non-being; it cannot be described in words inasmuch as it lies beyond the range of speech and mind:—

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह । आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् ।
न बिभेति कदाचन ।

(Taittirīya Up., II.iv. 1)

“The knower of the bliss inhering in the said Brahma, from which the organs of speech etc., along with the mind return, unable as they are to reach it, never gives way to fear.”

That all-blissful nature of Brahma can be known only with a stable, subtle and refined intellect:—

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोऽत्मा न प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्या बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

(Kāṭha. I.iii. 12)

“This Supreme Being, the Supreme Spirit, which though indwelling all created beings as the Self, is not manifest, hidden as it is (behind the veil of Māyā); it can only be apprehended by men of penetrating vision with their subtle and sharp intellect.”

The Gītā also says:—

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद्बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥

(VI. 21)

“Nay, in which the soul experiences the eternal and supersensuous joy which can be apprehended only with a subtle and refined intellect, and established in which the said Yogī does not deviate from the Truth on any account.”

After knowing the transcendent Brahma, the Supreme Spirit, the knower attains the said All-blissful Brahma:—

स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति ।

(Muṇḍaka Up. III.ii. 9)

“Whosoever comes to realize the aforesaid transcendent Brahma becomes the same as Brahma.”

The aspect of Brahma which comes to be known during the act of knowledge is, however, an aspect qualified by the intellect; for it is such an aspect of Brahma alone which is apprehended with the intellect. That which consists of purely spiritual bliss is beyond the ken of the intellect, which is a product of matter. It cannot, however, be said that Brahma does not exist; It does exist, for it is to the existence of Brahma that all owe their existence and Brahma alone is the material as well as the efficient cause of all. In the Brahma-Sūtras we read:—

जन्माद्यस्य यतः ।

(I. i. 2)

(Brahma) is that from which the appearance etc., (viz., the continuance and dissolution too) of the universe proceed.

Though real, the aforesaid Brahma is entirely different from that which is grasped through the faculty distinguishing

the real from the unreal from the worldly point of view. Hence the scripture says:—

न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ।

(Last quarter of Gītā XIII. 12)

“That transcendent Brahma is neither spoken of as real nor as unreal (for the reality which is grasped with the intellect is only a reality qualified by the intellect).”

Though all knowledge, that Supreme Spirit is entirely different from knowledge and ignorance. Knowledge is only a function of the intellect of the faculty of understanding and the reverse of it is ignorance. Wisdom (विद्या) and Nescience (अविद्या) are only other names of these. All these are unconscious, while the Supreme Spirit is conscious. The Lord says:—

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥

(Gītā XIII. 17)

“That transcendent Brahma is said to be the light of all lights, and entirely beyond Māyā (ignorance). That godhead is knowledge itself, as also worth knowing and worth attaining through real Knowledge, and is particularly seated in the heart of all.”

In the Mahābhārata, Sage Sanatsujāta says to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra:—

यत् तच्छुक्रं महज्ज्योतिर्दीप्यमानं महद् यशः ।
तद् वै देवा उपासते तस्मात् सूर्यो विराजते ।
योगिनस्तं प्रपश्यन्ति भगवन्तं सनातनम् ॥

(Udyoga. XLVI. 1)

“That which is pure Brahma is a great light, resplendent and consisting of great renown. All gods worship it alone. The sun derives its light from it. Yogīs realize that eternal godhead.”

The idea is that Brahma is consciousness and is entirely different from knowledge and ignorance both. It knows all, while none else knows It. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।
भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन ॥

(Gītā VII. 26)

“Arjuna, I know all beings, past as well as present, nay, even those which are yet to come; but none (devoid of faith and reverence) knows Me.” For the godhead is beyond the ken of one’s intellect.

That Supreme Spirit remains unconnected with all, though present everywhere, and is (essentially) a non-doer, though active.

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः ।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥

(Gītā XIII. 31)

“Arjuna, being without beginning and devoid of attributes, this indestructible Supreme Spirit, though dwelling in the body, in fact does nothing, nor gets contaminated.”

In order to define the nature of the aforesaid Supreme Spirit it is further said:—

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।
सूक्ष्मत्वात्तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत् ॥

“It exists outside as well as inside all beings, and constitutes the animate and the inanimate creation as well. And by reason of its subtlety It is incomprehensible; It is close at hand and stands afar too.”

Just as ether exists inside as well as outside the clouds, the Supreme Spirit exists inside as well as outside the world; nay, the clouds too are ether itself evolutes of ether as they are:—

आकाशाद् वायुः, वायोरग्निः, अग्नेरापः ।

(Taittirīya., II.i.I)

“The air evolves from ether, fire from the air and water from fire (and the clouds are the same as water).”

Hence just as ether itself gets transformed into a cloud, so does the said Supreme Spirit Itself assume the form of the animate and inanimate creation of Its own volition.

सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

(Taittirīya., II.VI. 1)

“The said Supreme Spirit willed as follows:— Let Me appear in numerous forms.”

That is why—

भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥

“Viewing the transcendent Brahma, the Supreme Spirit, present in the diverse created beings, the wise become immortal on departing from the world.”

Being subtler than the subtle, the said Supreme Spirit cannot come within the purview of anyone. Hence It is spoken of as subtle and as such It has been declared as unknowable. A Śruti text says:—

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीया-
नात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

(First half of Katha., I.ii. 20)

“Seated in the cave of the heart of this individual soul, the Supreme Spirit is subtler than the subtle and vaster than the vast.”

Sage Sanatsujāta too, says:—

अणीयो रूपं क्षुरधारया समं
महच्च रूपं तद् वै पर्वतेभ्यः ॥

(Latter half of Mahā., Udyoga., XLIV. 29)

“That aspect of the Supreme Spirit is extremely subtle like the edge of a razor and more extensive even than mountains. (In other words) It is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest).”

अणोरणीयान् सुमनाः सर्वभूतेषु जाग्रति ।

(First half of Ibid, Udyoga., XLVI., 31)

“The Supreme Spirit is subtler than the subtlest and is endowed with a pure mind. It (alone) is manifest in all created beings.”

The Supreme Spirit is remoter than the remotest and closer than the closest from the point of view of space, time, substance and conception. Judged from the point of view of space, water lies beyond the earth, fire lies beyond water, the air lies beyond fire, ether lies beyond the air, the cosmic mind lies beyond ether, the cosmic Ego lies beyond the cosmic mind, Mahattattva or the principle of Cosmic Intelligence lies beyond Cosmic Ego, Avyākṛta Māyā or Mūla Prakṛti (Undifferentiate Primordial Matter) lies beyond Mahattattva and the Supreme Spirit lies even beyond the Mūla Prakṛti. There is nothing beyond the Supreme Spirit. Hence It is remoter than the remotest:—

पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥

(Latter half of Kāṭha. III. I)

“There is nothing beyond the Puruṣa (Spirit); that is the highest limit, that is the highest goal.”

Considered from the point of view of space, this physical body (the Annamaya Kośa) is the nearest as compared to all other objects. Closer to it is the Prāṇa (the vital air or the vital sheath as it is called). Nearer than Prāṇa are the senses; nearer than the senses is the mind (the mental sheath); nearer than the mind is the

intellect (the Vijñanamaya Kośa). Nearer than the intellect is the Undifferentiated Māyā (the Blissful sheath). Nearer even than the latter is our own Self. Nothing is nearer than the Self and Supreme Spirit Itself is our own Self.

The Lord says:—

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

(The first half of Gītā X. 20)

“I am the (universal) Self seated in the heart of all beings.”

Hence the said Supreme Spirit is remoter than the remotest and closer than the closest. Let us now examine the remoteness as well as the nearness of the Supreme Spirit from the point of view of time. There are three broad divisions of time viz., the past, the present and the future. The present is the nearest. Being eternal, the said Supreme Spirit undoubtedly exists at the present moment. The past and the future are the remotest in the world. In the past the Supreme Spirit unquestionably existed even when none else was there.

सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

(Chāndogya Up., VI. ii. 1)

“O good one, at the beginning (of creation) the Supreme Spirit was the only entity present without a second.”

And in future the Supreme Spirit will continue even when none else will remain. So says Naciketā to Yama (the god of retribution):—

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः ।

मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्था वेद यत्र सः ॥

(Kātha., I. ii. 25)

“Who can know correctly what like and where located

is the Supreme Spirit, to whom the Brāhmaṇas as well as the Kṣatriyas or in other words the entire living creation serves as food and Death or the Time-Spirit (who devours all) serves as a sauce."

अपारणीयं तमसः परस्तात् तदन्तकोऽप्येति विनाशकाले ।

(First half of Mahā., Udyoga. XI. IV. 29)

"None can reach the end of that Brahma. It lies (entirely) beyond the darkness of ignorance. The Time-Spirit too, which destroys all at the time of universal dissolution, disappears into It."

The Supreme Spirit being both the efficient and the material cause of this world, the whole of this world is in substance too, the same as the Supreme Spirit. The Lord says:—

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।
तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा ॥

(Gītā XIII. 30)

"The moment man perceives the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the one Supreme Spirit, and the spreading forth of all beings from the same Supreme Spirit, that very moment he attains Brahma (who is all Truth, all Consciousness and all Bliss)"

Sage Sanatsujāta too says:—

तस्माद् वै वायुरायातस्तस्मिंश्च प्रयतः सदा ।
तस्मादग्निश्च सोमश्च तस्मिंश्च प्राण आततः ॥
सर्वमेव ततो विद्यात् तत्तद् वक्तुं न शक्नुमः ।
योगिनस्तं प्रपश्यन्ति भगवन्तं सनातनम् ॥

(Mahā., Udyoga., XLVI. 11-12)

"From that integral Brahma has sprung the air and in it alone it moves. From It, again have emanated fire and the moon and in It has spread the vital principle. We

are unable to enumerate the different categories that have sprung from It. (In short) one should know that all has appeared from It (and is therefore identical with It). Yogīs (alone) directly perceive (in their heart) that eternal godhead.”

Everything being the same as the Supreme Spirit, the latter is nearer than the nearest. Really speaking, however, It is altogether distinct from and entirely beyond all entities; hence It is remoter than the remotest.

That is why the Śruti says:—

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

(Īśa. Up., 5)

“The aforesaid Supreme Spirit moves and (also) does not move; It is far and It is near too. It permeates all this (creation) and It stands outside too of all this.”

Judging from the point of view of mental outlook, we can say that in the eyes of a man who believes in the existence of the Supreme Spirit the latter is nearer than the nearest:—

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥

(Kāṭha. II.iii. 13)

“The Supreme Spirit should be recognized in the first instance as existent; in other words Its existence should first of all be positively affirmed; and (then) It should be realized as such. The latter of these two, viz., Realization dawns on the aspirant (as a matter of course) when the Supreme Spirit has been recognized as definitely existing.”

The Supreme Spirit is, on the other hand, the farthest to him who does not believe in It, who is an atheist.

Nay, the said Supreme Spirit is All-consciousness and consists of transcendent Bliss. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।
स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ॥

(V. 21)

“He whose mind remains unattached to sense-objects, derives through meditation the Sāttvika joy which dwells in the mind; then having completely identified himself through meditation with Brahma, that Yogī enjoys eternal Bliss.”

And—

युञ्जन्नेवं सदाऽऽत्मानं योगी विगतकल्मषः ।
सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ॥

(Gītā VI. 28)

“Thus uniting his self constantly with God, the sinless Yogī easily enjoys the undying Bliss of oneness with Brahma.”

The “eternal Bliss” and “undying Bliss” referred to in the above two verses denote the joy which is the reward of all spiritual endeavour, viz., the transcendent Brahma or the Supreme Spirit; for—

आनन्दमयोऽभ्यासात् ।

(Brahma-Sūtras. I. i. 12)

“The word ‘Ānanda’ (Bliss) having been repeatedly used in Śruti texts to denote Brahma, the word “Ānandamaya” in this aphorism stands for the transcendent Brahma or the Supreme Spirit alone.”

That All-Blissful Supreme Spirit is full by Itself and this world too is full of that All-Blissful Supreme Spirit alone.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

(Brh. Up., V.i. 1)

“That Supreme Spirit, which is All-Truth, All-Consciousness and All-Bliss, is full by Itself; this universe too is full of that Supreme Spirit; for this universe (which is full of the Supreme Spirit) has emanated from that All-Full Brahma, the Supreme Spirit. The striver having acknowledged and being established in the Supreme Spirit, which fills the universe and is full by Itself, the All-Full Brahma or the Supreme Spirit alone remains in his eyes.”

Sage Sanatsujāta too, says:—

पूर्णात् पूर्णान्युद्धरन्ति पूर्णात् पूर्णानि चक्रिरे ।
हरन्ति पूर्णात् पूर्णानि पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।
योगिनस्तं प्रपश्यन्ति भगवन्तं सनातनम् ॥

(Mahā., Udyoga., XLV.i.10)

“From the Supreme Spirit, which is full by Itself, emanated all mobile and immobile creatures (which are full in that they have come forth from the All-Full God). These latter move about only because they derive their existence and activity from the All-Full Brahma. From the all-full Brahma, again, do they disappear into the all-full Brahma, so that (in the end) the All-Full Brahma alone remains. Yogīs directly perceive (in their heart) that eternal godhead.”

Therefore, grasping the true nature of Brahma as aforesaid, strivers on the path of knowledge should worship It accordingly. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

तदबुद्ध्यस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥

(V. 17)

“Those whose mind and intellect are wholly merged in Him, who remain constantly established in identity with Him and have finally become one with Him, their sins being wiped out by wisdom, reach the state whence there is no return.”

According to the above statement of the Lord, worshippers of Brahma without form and attributes—Brahma, who is All-Truth, All-Consciousness and all-Bliss—would do well to sit down in a secluded place in an easy and steady posture and contemplate as follows on the true nature of the said Supreme Spirit, who is All-Truth, All-Consciousness and All-Bliss:—The Supreme Spirit is consummate Bliss, limitless Joy, placid Joy, solid Bliss, stable Joy, unfailing Joy, eternal Bliss, Supreme Bliss, extensive Joy, endless Joy, inconceivable Joy, Joy and Joy alone. Joy and Joy alone pervades everywhere. There is nothing else than Joy. By repeatedly revolving as above the true nature of Brahma the mind gets merged in the Supreme Spirit. Nay, the intellect too, gets merged in the true nature of the aforesaid Brahma by contemplating with one's intellect on the distinctive nature of Brahma as is grasped with the intellect by revolving the aforesaid characteristics, which has been spoken of in the Gītā VI. 21 as ‘बुद्धिग्राह्यम्’, (which can be apprehended with the intellect) and as ‘ज्ञेयम्’ (Knowable) in Ibid., XIII. 12. So long as the contemplation continues, the triad of the meditator, meditation and the object of meditation persists; but when the triad disappears, the Supreme Spirit alone remains. Such nature of Brahma having been grasped with the intellect, it is something qualified by the intellect. But when the worshipper gets fully established in it, the

impurities, distraction and opacity of his mind are got rid of and he becomes one with Brahma. Then the difference of name, time, nature and knowledge disappears and the true nature alone of the Supreme Spirit remains, Its name and knowledge fall off. This is what goes by the name of Nirvikalpa Samādhi (the state of unqualified absorption). The reward of this Nirvikalpa Samādhi is what they call the Supreme Goal. That has been spoken of as the “Attainment of Brahma,” on reaching which the worshipper no longer returns to this world but becomes one with transcendent Brahma, which is unexcelled Joy solidified, and his life gets fulfilled forever.

□□

What is Piety?

‘Supreme Piety’ consists in believing more than what is open to the eye—the utterances of God, exalted souls and the teachings of sacred books like Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā. We undoubtedly believe whatever comes within the purview of our knowledge. ‘Supreme Piety’, however, consists in believing more than what is directly perceptible such holy utterances relating to that which is beyond our knowledge. God, for example, is not visible to the generality of men. Putting faith in the scriptures and the utterances of holy men and getting convinced of the positive existence of God is an instance of ‘Supreme Piety.’ Suppose an exalted soul always speaking the truth declares an ordinary building to be of gold, and the building immediately appears to a devout man as made of gold. This is Supreme Piety. Such reverence is indeed highly amazing. To the knowledge of that reverent soul and under his supervision the building had been constructed with lime, clay, stone and bricks. Since however, the exalted soul pronounced it as made of gold, it began to appear to him as such. This constitutes the highest form of reverence.

To a man endowed with reverence of an order inferior to this, the structure appears as plastered with lime, but he believes it to have been converted into a gold structure. He is convinced that although the house appears as plastered with lime it has no doubt inwardly turned into an edifice of gold. In this way, though perceiving it to be plastered with lime, he recognizes it to be of gold.

A man endowed with faith of a still inferior order says:—“Had the exalted soul averred that the structure would be transformed into one of gold, it would have been turned into an edifice of gold. But since at the time he declared it to be gold it was actually plastered with lime and hence it continues to be such even now. Of course he believes that if the exalted soul declares even now that the house will be transformed into one of gold it can be so converted. This faith is of a third grade. One who is endowed with faith of a still lower order feels that whatever lies within the sphere of possibility can certainly be accomplished by the word of the exalted soul; but if he declares anything which is impossible it cannot come to be true. If, for example, he declares that the sun will cool down, it cannot so cool down. If, on the other hand, a woman is in the family way and the exalted soul predicts that she will deliver a male or a female child, this can happen. If, however, he prophesies that she will bring forth a stone, such an impossible thing cannot happen.

To a man endowed with reverence everything is possible. We read in Śrīmad Bhāgavata how while Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa lived in Dvārakā certain Yādava youths of that city dressed Sāmba (son of Śrī Kṛṣṇa through Jāmbavatī) as an enceinite girl and taking him to the presence of certain ascetics who happened to be there and in order to test their supersensuous knowledge inquired about the sex of the child, which they said, was going to be delivered by the boy posing as a girl. The ascetics thereupon pronounced a curse, predicting that the so-called girl would deliver a pestle and the material which the boy had placed on his belly in order to appear like a big-bellied woman actually turned out to be a pestle.

The sages, who had come to know of the hoax practised on them by the Yādava youth, uttered something which was absurd on the face of it. The prediction nonetheless came out to be true. The ascetics predicted further that the pestle would bring destruction to their race and it actually led to their destruction.

Hence a man who is endowed with Supreme Piety and has unswerving faith in the words of saints and exalted souls is convinced that even if an exalted soul utters something which is absurd on the face of it, it can come out to be true and that even that which is possible can become impossible if a saint declares it to be such.

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